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The church and the Bible

THE CHURCH AND THE BIBLE

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THE CHURCH AND THE BIBLE

BY

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TO

ARTHUR L. STRIDE, Esq., J.P.

THE FOLLOWING PAGES

ARE INSCRIBED

PREFACE

THE six Sermons contained in the present volume were preached in substance in the church of St. Mark, Regent's Park, and in the parish churches of Hatfield and Chelmsford, during the Lent of 1897. Sermon IV. was also preached in the church of St. Vedast, Foster Lane, and Sermon II. in the chapel of Lincoln's Inn.

They are now printed at the wish of a member of the congregation at Hatfield, to whose kindly interest their publication is due.

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SERMON I.

THE HISTORY OF REVELATION.

"He gave Israel a law,
Which He commanded our forefathers to teach their children;
That their posterity might know it,
And the children which were yet unborn;
To the intent that, when they came up,
They might show their children the same."

PSALM lxxviii. 5, 6.

MAN'S first knowledge of God was derived neither from a study of nature nor from a study of himself. According to Scripture, it came as a supernatural Revelation. Man is not represented in the Bible as struggling out of nature-worship into a nobler adoration, nor as coming from the acceptance of many and false divinities to the acceptance of the One and the True. On the contrary, man at the beginning is

with the creations of their hopes and fears. They worshipped everything. They appealed to the stars. They worshipped the beasts of the earth and the birds of the air. They even sank so low as to worship themselves. Strange and fantastic, repulsive and cruel, arose the forms of innumerable divinities, behind which the one true God further and further continually retreated.

And yet, error and confusion notwithstanding, the first Revelation was maintained in the chosen family, and handed on. We are permitted to trace it in Noah, in Abraham, in Isaac, in Israel; renewed from time to time to those who kept it faithfully, and so transmitted through the successive generations. They held it as their priceless treasure, the noblest part of their inheritance. Thousands of years had elapsed since the days when it was given, but the first Revelation survived among all the

changes, until the time when, by a mysterious providence, Israel was led down into Egypt, and there the period of the first Revelation closes.

II.

We enter upon the period of the second Revelation. The second was delivered from Sinai. God's power, God's wisdom, God's moral glory, God's unity of nature, these truths were delivered with a clearness and an appalling solemnity altogether unsurpassed.

But here, as previously, we are concerned, not so much with the substance of the Revelation, as with the method in which that Revelation once given was transmitted.

1. Observe, then, that the second Revelation was not thrown out into the world to secure itself a home where best it might. On the contrary, it was *entrusted to the keeping of a Society.* There was created a spiritual society in which the truth was

to be contained, and by which the truth was to be transmitted. For that purpose was Israel called out of Egypt. Israel, now a slave population, was drawn out by a mighty Hand and a stretched-out Arm. "He led them through the deep as through a wilderness." So He drew them onward and upward until, in the solitude of Sinai, the people stood alone to be confronted with God. There they were to hear the voice of the Almighty.

"Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."[a] God's oneness—that is the substance of the second Revelation. And to maintain it was Israel created into a society. By their priesthood, by their succession, by their sacrifices they were to keep this truth, and hand it on to the ages yet untold.

[a] Deut. vi. 4.

"He gave Israel a law,
Which He commanded our forefathers to teach their children;
That their posterity might know it,
And the children which were yet unborn;
To the intent that, when they came up,
They might show their children the same."

So for forty years He led them up and down the wilderness, sternly secluded from all contact with mankind, lest they should be "mingled among the heathen and learn their works."[a] And so another generation arose, who saw not with their own eyes, yet received the truth and maintained it. Then on into the land of promise. Tribe after tribe was driven out before them, for "the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations."[b] There we behold them, now sinking under the burden of a destiny almost too great for them, now rising to the dignity of their mission, now falling miserably beneath it, now passionately clinging to their fathers' faith, now

[a] Ps. cvi. 35. [b] Numb. xxiii. 9.

yielding to the heathen mythologies which exercised over them a strange and mournful fascination.[2] It was Israel's mission to maintain the second Revelation unimpaired. And it is this which gives such indescribable significance to the fact that, in the midst of Israel, even Israel, God's beloved, God's chosen, should ever have risen the pagan cry, "O Baal, hear us!" It is this which explains why they were scourged and disciplined with such severity, in order to force them into the faithful discharge of their glorious mission. War and plague, defeat, and even exile, are for this cause inflicted upon them. "By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept, when we remembered thee, O Zion!" They learnt the lesson. Humbled and rendered faithful, they returned to their homes, but not to their unbelief. From that time onward, for centuries, by their worship, their priests, their altars, they maintained

among themselves, and yet in the behalf of all mankind, that central truth of religious faith: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is *one* Lord." And to this day they have never forgotten it. Thus the second Revelation was entrusted to a Society.

2. Entrusted to a Society—that is only a portion of the truth. The second Revelation was, at the same time, *recorded in a Book.* The religious story of man, from the first to the second Revelation, was there made permanent, in the Book of the Law. And here begins the wonderful history of the Holy Scriptures. The Book of the Law, when completed, was, by the order of the Lawgiver, to be enshrined in the very midst of Israel's sanctities, in the side of the Ark.[3] It was to be guarded there, not ignored, not forgotten, but read and learnt. The kings of Judah were to copy it when called to ascend the throne. All the men of Israel were to come up to the great feast,

and to hear the reading of the Book of the Law.

> "The words which I command thee this day
> Shall be in thine heart;
> And thou shalt teach them to thy children,
> And shalt talk of them
> When thou sittest in thine house,
> And when thou walkest by the way,
> And when thou liest down,
> And when thou risest up."

The whole mind of the Society was to be saturated with the teachings of the sacred Book. And in proportion as Israel was familiar with its contents, did Israel discharge its glorious mission. And when the Book was ignored and forgotten, then did Israel fail. It was a time of singular apathy and neglect when Hilkiah the priest found, so runs the narrative, found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord, found it as something obsolete, neglected. And the good king Hezekiah called an assembly of all Israel. The king stood by a pillar in the house of the Lord,

and read the pages of the Book in the hearing of all the people. It came as a voice from the past, a voice from the dead, passage after passage sounding strangely in contrast with the prevalent neglect. Deep emotion ran through the whole assembly, and to a man they vowed that henceforward the Book and the Society should never be parted, the one from the other.

Entrusted to a Society, recorded in a Book; these two, not merely the one, form the Divine method by which the second Revelation was to be rendered man's permanent inheritance.

3. And here we ought to notice a third characteristic of this second Revelation. It was *progressive*.[4] How widely the work of the Almighty differs from the work of man! Man works in a hurry; his time is brief, and, if the work be not finished soon, he cannot hope to gaze on its completion. God is never in a hurry. Being eternal,

He can afford to wait. His education of the human race has been very deliberate. Little by little, fragment by fragment, as man was able to bear it and take it in, the revelation of the truth has been imparted. The second Revelation was not delivered all at once. It was gradual. In many fragments and in many ways, God spake in time past unto the Fathers by the prophets. It was progressive. Prophet after prophet, each with his separate message, was sent renewing the old but increasing the sum-total of truth revealed, so that Israel learns far more when the days drew near the birth of Christ than it learns in the days of Sinai. In the earlier time, the whole force of revelation centred on the one grand truth of Israel's God so exclusively that even the doctrine of man's immortality itself seems partially obscured.[5] Thus Israel grew from more to more. And the Older Testament was not complete in a century; no, nor yet in a thousand years.

III.

We reach the third, which is the Christian Revelation. It is the Revelation that God is love.

"God is love," said Christianity. The love of God does not mean satisfaction with Himself, nor does it mean an infinite capacity never called forth into exercise for lack of an adequate object whereon to rest. Nor could the love of God be satisfied in contemplation of His creatures. A million creations would be no adequate object for a love which is infinite. Christianity here explained that in the mystery of the Divine nature there is more than one Divine personality. The love of the Eternal Father finds its adequate object in His Eternal Son. This is the most profound yet most intelligible conception of God ever presented to the mind of thinking men.[6]

But here, again, we are concerned not so much with the substance of the Revelation,

as with the method by which it was transmitted from that age to this.

1. Observe, then, that the third Revelation was not thrown out into the world, to wander up and down as a stranger until some should take it in. On the contrary, it was *entrusted to a Society*. Just as to maintain the doctrine that God is one, there was created the Society of Israel; so to maintain the doctrine that God is love, there was created the Christian Church. In the heart of Israel, in the midst of Jerusalem, a new Society was founded at the first Whitsuntide. It was the work of the Holy Ghost. It was created to embody and to perpetuate, to contain and to teach, the substance of the Christian Revelation. "Go ye into all the world; preach the gospel to every creature," "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the

world."[a] It is the Church's prophetic office, to maintain this Revelation and to teach it.

2. Entrusted to a Society — and also *recorded in a Book.* Just as the Revelation that God is one produced the Old Testament, so the Revelation that God is love produced the New. Here were rendered permanent for all ages certain aspects of His most holy life, and the great doctrines involved therein, drawn out for our instruction by Apostles and Apostolic men.

3. And here observe the striking difference between the second and the third Revelation. The second Revelation was progressive: the third is not. The second was given gradually: the third all at once. We may say that Israel in our Lord's day held a completer Revelation than Israel held in Moses' time. But we may not say that the modern Church has received truths unknown to or dimly guessed by the

[a] St. Mark xvi. 15, and St. Matt. xxviii. 20.

Apostles. The Christian Revelation is perfect, and therefore final. It is the faith once for all delivered to the saints.[7]

Thus there is a corresponding difference between the Old Testament and the New. The Old, as we have seen, was not completed in a century, nor in a thousand years; the New was finished in a single generation. The lifetime of St. John saw the first portion written; the lifetime of St. John extended beyond its close.

IV.

The history of Revelation has very important bearings on theories prevalent in the age in which we live. We see that the Divine method of perpetuating truth has been to entrust it to a Society, and to record it in a Book. These two—not only one, but two; not the Book without the Society, nor the Society without the Book.

1. Not the Society alone. For the tendency of a society is to be perpetually on the move. Men come and go. Fresh generations arise. New waves of thought pass over it. And there is nothing more difficult than for a society to maintain identity with its own past. Is it said, that the Church is by the Divine protection secured against all change? Yes, but not unconditionally.[8] The promise depends on the use of the appropriate means. And among the appointed means stands first the Holy Scriptures.

May we not see the reason why? For while a Society can change, a Book cannot change. There it is. Men may come and go, but the Book remains. The Revelation is there photographed, stereotyped, rendered permanent in certain aspects and certain expressions. There it is, graven as in the rock, and for ever; practically permanent and indestructible. Accordingly,

the function of the Book is to correct the Society's tendency to change. It is there for perpetual appeal. The different nature of a Society and a Book *providentially balance each other.*

The Bible is permanent: the Church develops. In the Bible, Revelation is, so to say, definitely fixed for ever, in certain unalterable terms. But in the Church the natural tendency is to compare truth with truth, to draw inferences, expand ideas, enlarge the boundaries. This is natural and right. But such a process demands the curbing corrective of a doctrinal statement which cannot change. A sacred Book is invaluable to a historic religion; it encourages identity; it secures constant reversion to type; it suggests a comparison of the old with the new, the first century with the last. The Church without the Book would be the expansive without the unchanging.

When, then, we are told by Roman Catholics that it is the function of the Church, and indeed its duty, to limit and temporarily restrain the faithful in their study of Holy Scripture,[9] we can but reply, This is to deprive the Society of the divinely appointed means whereby the tendency to change would be corrected. Many errors of the mediæval Church might have been altogether avoided if the whole mind of the Society had been thoroughly saturated with the teachings of the Scriptures.[10] To us it seems that the tendency of the Roman theory has been to exalt tradition at the expense of Scripture; that is, the expansive without the unchanging. And with the natural result: a long gradual development apart from any express explicit guidance of the Book, culminating at last in the creation of certain fresh dogmas, for which explicit Scriptural warrant is not claimed.

The Society ought never to be without a full knowledge of the Bible, and one of the greatest calamities which could befall any portion of the Church is ignorance of the Scriptures. "These words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children."[a] They are able to make thee "wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus."[b] Error in doctrine is distinctly traced by our Lord to ignorance of the Bible. "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures."[c]

The Divine method of perpetuating the revelation among mankind was not by a Society alone.

2. Nor is it by the Book alone.[11]

Suppose that, in our own day, a committee of independent gentlemen met, placed the Bible on the table, and, after deliberate study of its contents, determined to form

[a] Deut. vi. 6, 7. [b] 2 Tim. iii. 15. [c] St. Matt. xxi. 29.

themselves into voluntary associations for the purpose of mutual support and prayer. How would such procedure appear in the light of apostolic principles? It would be their exact reversal. It would be an entire forgetfulness of the Christian order of things. For the Christian order is not first the Bible and then the Church, but first the Church and then the Bible. It is not true that the Church was formed out of a careful study of the Bible. What is true, in accordance with facts, is that first the Holy Spirit created the Church, and afterwards in that Church gave existence to the New Testament. First the Church, and then the New Testament Scriptures.

Not by the Book alone. The attempt to perpetuate the Faith by the Book alone is certainly very mistaken. Why? For the simple reason that it *is* a book, and a book cannot possibly discharge the functions of a society. A book cannot perpetuate itself,

cannot translate itself, cannot adapt its stereotyped expressions to the changing needs of successive generations. It is the advantage of a book that it cannot do this. But in its strength is also its inevitable limitation. The book requires a keeper, an interpreter.

It is difficult to see how the Old Testament could have survived the storms of ages had it not been entrusted to the keeping of Israel. It is difficult to see how the New Testament could ever have been gathered together, to say nothing about its preservation, if it had not been entrusted to the keeping of the Christian Church. It might have survived, perhaps, amid the dust of an old-world library, the study of a few learned antiquaries, but it could scarcely have been the living Book which it is, unless protected and proclaimed by the Society to which it was given.

Think, for instance, what the Church

has done for the Psalter in taking the words of the Book and reiterating them, making them its treasury of devotion these three thousand years, translating them into every language on the earth. It is the Society which makes the Bible a living Book.

Moreover, consider the three Revelations. The first was unwritten, the second and third were recorded in a Book, but also entrusted to a Society; but no revelation has ever been recorded in a book without being entrusted to a society. The lesson of history is that Revelation is not entrusted to the keeping of a Book alone. May that lesson not be written in vain!

Through various circumstances of our national experience, the Book is, to many minds, more easily realized and regarded and revered than the Society. The Divine character of the Bible more easily impresses them than that of the Church. To

them the Church seems vast, and vague, and ill-defined, whereas the Bible has its limits, is tangible. Here it is; you have it in your hands. Moreover, the human element in the Church sometimes obscures the Divine, whereas the human element in the Bible is, at any rate, one which does not change with changing years. All which only amounts to saying that the incidents to which a society and a book are liable in the course of centuries are not by any means one and the same. But if the Church has a human element, and the treasure is in earthen vessels, yet it has no less a Divine element, and the sufficiency is of God. And the failure to realize the true character of the Society is exceedingly injurious to the safety of the Book. Nowhere on earth has the existence of the Book been so fatally imperilled as among those to whom the authority and character of the Society have

become obscured or unknown. In the Society in which it originated and for which it was destined, has the Book been most secured from the disintegrating influence of time.

The Society *and* the Book—these are the two divinely appointed means of maintaining unaltered God's Revelation to man. "He gave Israel a Law." The Law is recorded in a Book: but it is to Israel that He gave it, commanding our forefathers to teach their children. "Go ye into all the world; preach the gospel to every creature." The gospel is embodied in the Book; but it is to the Church that He entrusted it. The Book and the Society; God has joined them together, and "what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

SERMON II.

THE ORIGIN AND THE GATHERING OF THE BOOKS.[12]

"Unto them were committed the oracles of God."—ROMANS iii. 2.

ONE day there fell from the lips of the Son of man the following statement: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." Familiarity may blunt our sense of its significance, but the language is positively tremendous. The Speaker can more readily contemplate the dissolution of heaven and earth than that His own words should pass away. One can imagine a stranger, overhearing the statement as he passed alon g

the temple court, looking up and thinking, "Who is this Galilæan, this utterer of startling assertions? We have had many revivals in Israel. Probably in a century He and all His sayings will be utterly forgotten." To human probability so it would have seemed. And what precautions did the Son of man adopt to secure permanence for His assertions? Job, when oppressed by a sense of human transitoriness, exclaims—

> "Oh that my words were written!
> Oh that they were printed in a book,
> And graven in iron and lead in the rock for ever,"

in order that they might thereby survive the storms of the ages. But Jesus Christ? Once, indeed, He stooped and wrote upon the ground. Beyond that He wrote nothing. What precautions, then, did He adopt to secure His words against the laws of change?

I.

He prepared the way for the founding of a great Society in which His words should be recorded.

Accordingly *He selected twelve men.*[13] These He would train. To these, when able to bear it, He would entrust the truth. To these He devoted Himself. He did, indeed, pause to comfort the sorrowing and relieve the suffering when human trials appealed to Him: but this was incidental, a necessity of His position rather than the purpose of His life. He did, indeed, give teaching to the crowd, but it was in simple elementary pictures of parable and allegory, that "truth, embodied in a tale, might enter in at lowly doors." But His heart was bent on the training of the twelve. To the crowd the parable: to the twelve the explanation. To the crowd

the simple elements : to the twelve the deep mysteries of the Faith.

Christ could not entrust the truth to the keeping of the *crowds*.[14] There was in the crowd no coherence, no unity. To throw the truth among them would be to let the truth be torn to pieces, to be crucified as they crucified Him. Shifty and variable, the characteristic of human nature was its lamentable untrustworthiness ; and the Son of God could not build with material such as this. His words, if left to the crowd, would soon have passed away. Our Lord never went about publicly proclaiming the fact of His Divinity. Rather is there a reticence, a deeply significant reserve in His declarations of the truth. Thus He said to the Twelve, "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to others in parables." This is the reason why our Lord often withdrew Himself and them from the crowds

and the cities, in order to devote Himself more unreservedly to their instruction in the quiet of country places; as when He said, "Come ye yourselves apart."

Thus He taught them by His *utterances*. He taught them more still by *His character, His life*. He permitted them the closest intimacy. They saw Him under the most varied circumstances: in failure and in success, at a marriage and at a funeral, in the crowds and when alone; in order that the Divine reality, who He was, might gradually dawn upon them. Then, when the appropriate time had come, He led them away from the city, some hundred miles up to the north, under the snowy heights of Hermon, and there, in the unbroken calm, away from the world's distractions, asked them the great, the central question,[15] "Whom do men say that I am?" And they told Him the gossip of the day. But brushing aside all that without discussion,

as totally inadequate to the facts of the case, He asked them again, "But whom say *ye* that I am?" Back came the answer from one representing all, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." This was what He wanted, this for which He had waited, this the secret which all along He had striven to teach them. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona," He answered; "for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in Heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock [of faith in Christ's Divinity] I will build My Church." He is preparing the way for the foundation of the great Society in which His words shall be known, understood, and treasured and taught.

2. And if our Lord chiefly devoted Himself to the training of the Twelve during His ministry, still more is this the case after His Resurrection.[16] Then He is

theirs exclusively. He appeared to none except disciples. And to these He not only taught the fact that He was risen, but gave them, in the light of His Resurrection, the laws, the practices, the principles, of His Church, the Kingdom of Heaven. And then, at the time of His final departure into Heaven, He bids them wait; wait in Jerusalem, for the coming of that Divine Person, Who should complete the work for which our Lord prepared. And so they waited. Then down the Spirit came in tongues as of flame, the light of knowledge and the zeal of love, "to teach the Apostles and to lead them into all truth."[a] And forth they went to begin the work imposed upon them, and stood in a body in the Jerusalem street.

Let us attempt to realize what it was that stood there in the Jerusalem street.

(1) It was a Society, a community of

[a] Communion Office.

men. "They were all with one accord in one place"[a]: an outward unity, an inward oneness of idea. It was a Society. Its limits were sharply defined: those that are without, easily distinguishable from those that are within. It had its form of admission, its power to exclude. It had its laws and practices imposed on all the members. It had its officers already there; its principle of succession. Above all, it possessed certain distinctive principles, accepted as a body by them all. There was the Apostles' doctrine, there the Apostles' fellowship, there the Apostles' worship. It bore, in fact, all the characters by which a society of men is commonly known and distinguished. It seems difficult to read the Acts and not recognize this.

(2) But further: This was not only a Society, but a *divine* Society.[17] It differed in character from every society which has

[a] Acts ii. 1.

been founded since. For it was not created by men. No summons went out, "At such a time we will meet, and erect the Church." On the contrary, they took no steps whatever. They simply waited. They made no movement, wrought nothing, inaugurated nothing. They waited for God's hour, God's way, God's will. And thus the Church was erected by the act of God from Heaven. Thus the Church was in the world, but not of the world. It was composed of men, but erected by God. It was a work of the Holy Ghost. Behold it! for this surely is a matter of very deep importance. The Church is a Divine Society, a community of human beings founded by the Holy Ghost.

And for the next twenty years after the Ascension, this Divine Society, the Church of the living God, *expanded* with astonishing rapidity. It rose up in city after city. Its circle grew wider and wider. It passed

beyond the Holy Land, through the cities of Asia, across the sea, still onward to the West. It came over into Europe to help us. And during all this time the Church taught, the Church baptized, the Church fed the faithful before any portion of the New Testament had received its present form.

II.

We have seen the origin of the Society. Let us next consider the *origin of the books*.[18] Converts flocked into the Church on every side: men of the most widely different temperaments, yet roughly to be grouped in three principal types, corresponding to the three languages which appeared upon the Cross, the Hebrew, the Latin, and the Greek. These three represent widely different types of human genius. And all alike, after their admission to the Church, needed further and fuller instruction. Accordingly for each of these

types a form of the Christian gospel was provided.

1. There was the Hebrew convert to the Church's Faith—the Israelite, God's chosen, the man of religion, the believer in Revelation, the man of faith.

For his instruction St. Matthew wrote. He would show the Israelite that Jesus is the Christ, Israel's expected king. Thus he draws down the line of our Lord's ancestry from Abraham, the founder of the family, and David, the founder of the kingdom. Jesus Christ is David's Son.[a] He told them how Eastern chiefs paid tribute at the cradle of the infant King.[b] "And Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." He shows in numerous details how step by step our Lord's life corresponds with the old predictions, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet."[c] He presents our Lord as

[a] St. Matt. i. [b] St. Matt. ii. [c] St. Matt. ii. 23

the lawgiver of the new Kingdom, in the Sermon on the Mount.[a] He gives the parables of the New Kingdom[b] to show that Christ, notwithstanding His humiliation, is indeed a King over a Kingdom far more glorious than Israel's ordinary nationalized expectations, a spiritual and worldwide rule. He told them that the Lord would come in the glory of His Father, with His holy angels, and say to the faithful, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."[c] He told them, not without keenest irony, how the powers of the world endeavoured to prevent the King's resurrection, and how He appeared with the triumphant language of kingly majesty upon His lips: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth."[d]

Every detail of this kingly aspect would

[a] St. Matt. v.–vii.
[b] St. Matt. xiii.
[c] St. Matt. xxv. 34.
[d] St. Matt. xxviii. 18.

be peculiarly interesting and of permanent worth to the mind and the heart of an Israelite. It is *the gospel of the Kingdom*, the aspect of the Unchanging Gospel appropriate to the Hebrew.

2. Next follows the Roman convert to the Church's Faith—a man of widely different type: not, as a rule, a great thinker, but a man of action; impatient of abstract thought, but gifted with a perfect genius for organization, a shrewd, active, energetic business-like man. He, too, must have an aspect of the gospel appropriate to him.

For him St. Mark shall write. No genealogies: he wouldn't appreciate them. No lengthy discourses: he hadn't the patience. No deep reflections: he wouldn't understand them. Few parables: he was too matter-of-fact and prosaic. Few references to prophecy: his education had not prepared him for these. But for him a

brief vivid realistic narrative of our Lord's works of power: how He went about doing good; how He exhibited marvellous supernatural power—power over nature, over disease, over death, power, as when with a mighty word He stilled the raging of the storm at sea, power, as when He drove out the devils into the swine, and the swine rushed madly down to death in the cold deep, symbolizing the extinction of evil human passion; how He cursed the barren tree, and it instantly withered, because He could not endure profession without practice; how the facts forced from the Roman soldier who watched Him die, the great exclamation, "Truly this Man was the Son of God."

We can almost imagine how the Roman soldier on the march would sit down to read, in this briefest of the Gospels, his brother soldier's estimate of Jesus Christ. It is the Gospel of action, the *Gospel of*

Divine power, singularly adapted to the men who worshipped power.

3. Then follows the *Greek* convert to the Faith—again a widely different type: a man of thought rather than a man of action, keen intellectual founder of philosophies, lover of the beautiful, the graceful, the imaginative, the poetic, rejoicing in everything human.

For him, St. Luke, the beloved physician, the artist, as tradition calls him, will describe another aspect of the Holy Life. He gives the gospel of the infancy, the Holy Childhood, the purely human interest, the song of the aged priest, the virgin mother's song, the song of a life's calm ending, the song of the holy angels,—all these will delight the child of nature, the imaginative Greek. He, too, describes the pedigree; but he traces it right back to Adam, "which was the son of God"—emphasizing the idea of our Lord's common humanity; He

is not the exclusive possession of Israel, He is the Son of man. So St. Luke told them how He opened His public ministry with gracious words of worldwide sympathy. He was sent to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind.[a] He describes the Lord's love of man as man; going beyond all national distinctions because He is the Son of man. He gives the parables which speak of pity for all human needs; the parable of the Good Samaritan;[b] the parable of the Prodigal Son;[c] the loving Father devising a means to bring His banished home, notwithstanding the elder brother's jealousy; the Lord's infinite compassion for the dying thief;[d] the Lord's own purely human resignation to the Father's will on Calvary, the last words recorded only by St. Luke, "Father, into Thy hands I com-

[a] St. Luke iv. 18.
[b] St. Luke x. 30–35.
[c] St. Luke xv. 11.
[d] St. Luke xxiii. 39.

mend My spirit."[a] He describes the lamentations and the tears of the daughters of Jerusalem, and how all the people who came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote upon their breasts and returned; how all nature appeared dissolved in lamentation; and then how the tears of the women were exchanged for the voices of the angels, and their shining garments, as they exclaim, "Why seek ye the Living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen."[b]

Can we not see how this *Gospel of world-wide sympathy*, this Gospel of human graciousness, would attract the heart of the child of nature, the lover of the beautiful?

Then comes St. Paul. He had the care of all the Churches; the scattered portions of the one Divine Society. The Church is now so vast he cannot visit as often as he would. He must supply his presence, as

[a] St. Luke xxiii. 46. [b] St. Luke xxiv. 5.

far as possible, by his letters. So he writes: writes severely rebuking the vacillating Church in Galatia, writes rejoicing in the steadfast faith of the Church in Ephesus, writes to answer the questions of the Church at Corinth, writes to plead in behalf of the runaway slave, writes letters of pastoral counsel to a distant diocese, writes a more systematic treatise on the faith for the instruction of the Church at Rome, which he has never yet been enabled to visit.

And all this time, be it remembered, for it is of first importance, the Church taught, the Church baptized, the Church ruled her children, before the writings of the New Testament were anything like completed.

Then time drew near the close of the greatest century in human history, the century of the Incarnation.[19] Fifty years had passed since the Lord returned to heaven. St. James was dead, St. Peter was dead, St. Paul's labours were long since ended. Of all

the Apostles, one alone remained. There, in the Greek city, not far from the temple of Diana and the theatre where, years before, the mob thundered against St. Paul, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians,"—there he sat, the aged, the disciple whom Jesus loved, the last of the men of that group from Galilee, the sole survivor, the only man remaining who could say, "I heard; I saw; I touched. I stood beside His Cross. I rested on the very heart of the Son of God."

Can we not imagine something of the awe and reverence with which his young Greek converts hung upon his words, and grouped around him to hear of "the days of the Son of man"?

Soon that would be possible no longer.

What if the beloved John were to go the way of all the earth, and none remained to say, "I heard, I saw"! What knowledge of the mysteries of God would die with him!

They gathered round him in the close of the century, and besought him to record what his ears had heard and his eyes had seen.

Had he not dwelt on it these fifty years, living in that wondrous past? Jerusalem had perished since those days, the Temple was burnt to ruins; but in the memory of St. John they stand, detail and word and look and gesture, in the home and in the crowd; they remain, and must remain for him indelible, even for him whom Jesus loved.

And hence he spoke, like one far off, describing what he still can see and hear: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Thus from the thirty-three most sacred years St. John selected some thirty days—

the opening week of the ministry, the fortnight at the close, and a few days scattered between. Few, yes; but what glorious days! and teachings such as we might expect from the intimate companion of the Lord; not simple parables as He taught the crowd, but the deep spiritual lessons entrusted to the chosen few. It is the Gospel of the inner circle, *the Gospel of God made man*, the Gospel of the Holy Incarnation.

III.

Consider next the *gathering of the books together*.[20]

It was said of St. Paul that his bodily presence was weak and his speech contemptible, but "his letters," they said, "are weighty and powerful." But, for all that, no letters, not even those of an inspired Apostle, are an adequate substitute for the living voice and the bodily presence. So long as it was possible to go to St. Paul or

St. John and say, "Tell us what is the Christian doctrine of the Resurrection," or "Tell us what the Lord said, how He appeared that day"—so long as it was possible to ask this, even the Gospels could not be so highly valued. While those we love are with us face to face, and we can hear it all from their living lips, we do not so highly value their written communications. It is when death has intervened, setting us so far apart that we cannot hear each other speak, that we cannot sufficiently value the letters which they have left us. So it was with the Church when the Apostles were all departed.

Then the Church entered upon its important mission of the gathering of the writings. There was a letter there in Rome, there were two in Corinth, two more in Thessalonica. Some were in private hands. The elect lady had one;

the owner of the runaway slave another. The Bishop of Cyprus had two. One was in possession of a Bishop in Crete. Copies, also, must have been very few, their creation laborious and slow. Thus the gathering of the writings must have taken time. Nor can we point to any definite moment and say, here the Church assembled to define with authority the limits of the New Testament. What we can say is that the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, recognized, acknowledged, received the apostolic books, sifting and separating these out of the mass of early Christian literature of which we know there was a large accumulation. In this delicate and difficult task God guided His Church ("He shall guide you into all truth") to sever the writings which were inspired from those which, however excellent, were not inspired.

Meanwhile, during the whole of this

period, about one hundred years, the Church had taught the Faith, taught, baptized, confirmed, fed with the sacred gift, developed her system, ordained, consecrated successors to the Apostles, obeyed the instructions of her Lord, being guided by the Holy Ghost, while yet the New Testament was not gathered together.

IV.

We come next to the *reception*[21] of the books by the individual believer.

1. Upon what ground do we, in the first instance, accept the Bible? We accept it upon the authority of the Church.

For it should be remembered that the Bible nowhere determines the limits of its own contents. The Bible does not tell us of what books the Bible consists. We are forced to go outside the Bible to ascertain the limits of the Bible. The Old Testament we accept from the Jewish Church on the

authority of Jesus Christ. The New, on the authority of the Christian Church. St. Peter speaks of certain Epistles of St. Paul, but he neither enumerates nor quotes them. St. John solemnly warns against detraction or addition to the contents of one of the sacred books; but his words apply to the Book of the Revelation. Scripture presumes us otherwise taught the true limits of the sacred books. And "by experience we all know that the first outward motive, leading men so to esteem of the Scriptures, is the authority of God's Church."

2. Another reason has indeed been given by Protestants for our reception of the Bible. They say that it appeals to us in a way that no other book can do.

It is indeed most true that the written Word of God does appeal to the Christian conscience and convey the sense of a Divine authority. But to give this alone, as the ground for receiving the Scriptures, would

make reception depend on our feelings, which differ in different men, and are not always the same in ourselves. Besides, however convincing this may be to myself, it is no argument whatever to the outer world. The Mohammedan might say the same of the Koran.

Moreover, while it would be possible to say of the books of the Bible *in general*, that they appeal convincingly to our conscience, it would be impossible on this ground to justify the position of certain books *in particular*. For example, the Epistle of St. James did not at all appeal to the mind of Luther. And which of us, on this ground of our feelings upon the subject, could explain why the Canticles or the Book of Esther is included in the Old Testament, while the Book of Wisdom is placed in the Apocrypha?

Undoubtedly, there *is* a marked difference which we cannot help feeling between the

style of the apostolic Fathers, St. Clement, St. Ignatius, and the style of St. John and St. Paul. There is a difference very real, but very difficult to define. But this difference could never by itself certify to us the limits of inspiration.

The collection of the writings of the Apostles was, we would maintain, the doing of the Church. Instinctively, as guided by the Holy Ghost, and thus assisted in what it was doing, the Church, out of the great multitude of early writings,[a] selected unerringly those, and only those, which bore the character of Inspiration. The power of the Church to do this rests upon the promise of Jesus Christ. The writings gathered together are precisely those in which the Revelation of the Christian truth is contained. But such discrimination could not be possessed anywhere but in the Church. No power was

[a] Cf. St. Luke i. 1.

promised nor possessed by the world to do this thing. The insight necessary to determine the full agreement of a letter with the substance of the Creed on which the Church reposed, could belong to none but to the Church itself.

Here, then, is the answer to the question, "What precautions did our Lord take in order that His words should not pass away?" The answer is, that the Holy Ghost created a Society and a Book, committing the Book to the keeping of the Society. To the Church were committed the Oracles of God. Hence, in the Divine providence, they cannot pass away.

SERMON III.

THE CHURCH, THE INTERPRETER[22] OF THE BIBLE.

"Understandest thou what thou readest?"—Acts viii. 30.

Our previous subject was the writing and the gathering of the Books. We saw that they were written in the Church and collected by the Church. Following upon this, the important question arises, *Who is the Book's interpreter?*

I.

A very popular answer is, Let each *individual* interpret for himself. Now, against the theory that every man is to be his own

interpreter, there are very serious objections.

1. For, in the first place, *consider the character of the Book.* The Bible is a difficult Book.[23] Passages of marvellous simplicity can indeed be quoted; but if men attempt to derive their faith and practice from the Bible only, then it must surely be acknowledged that the Book is difficult. For, strictly speaking, the Bible is not one Book, but many. It is an entire literature, written in several languages, over a period of two thousand years, by a number of writers, in a number of different styles. It contains law, and history, and poetry, and biography, and letters, and visions, and predictions, and allegories, and proverbs. To read it through once will take some time; to study it, years; to derive from it, unaided, one's faith and practice will be, to say the least, a matter of considerable difficulty.

Moreover, the gift of Revelation was, as

we have already seen, very gradual. Three periods at least may be distinguished. There was a primitive Revelation, a progressive Revelation, and a perfect Revelation. Some of the practices enjoined were transitory, others permanent. It will not be easy for each individual to determine unaided which is which.

To this must be added that the Bible is admittedly an unsystematic Book.[24] No particular portion can be indicated where the entire faith and practice is all at once contained. This will not decrease the difficulty.

And, further, the writings of the New Testament are primarily intended for special needs. The truths with which they deal are not necessarily dealt with in proportion to their intrinsic importance, but in proportion to the needs of a particular place and time. A subject, thus, may be expansively treated, while another subject is dismissed in a single

line, yet in importance they may be equal, or the less discussed even the superior. This will not diminish the difficulty.

And if we turn from general considerations to particular passages, we are still impressed with a sense of difficulty. Is the prelude to St. John's Gospel simplicity to the average mind? Are the sharp antitheses of St. Paul, the letter and the spirit, the law and the gospel, grace and works, works and faith—so often and so grievously misunderstood, and yet the very keynotes to his teaching,—are these intelligible at once to the simplest of readers? The argument of the Epistle to the Romans has taxed many of the ablest minds ever since it was written; can it be described as an easy book?

It is only possible to call these simple, by going completely over difficulties without perceiving them. When we have read some majestic passage in Isaiah or some passage

in St. Paul, are we not conscious of our very limited comprehension of it? is there no appropriateness in the question, "Understandest thou what thou readest?"

That the Bible is difficult seems shown, again, by the endless contradictions derived from it. It has indeed been said that if men sincerely desire to reach its truths they will certainly discover them.[25] But it may be questioned whether we have any right to label all men as insincere merely because their interpretations are not in harmony with our own. Moreover, the greatest interpreters have acknowledged the difficulty. The difficulties of the Scriptures, says St. Augustine, are intended partly to excite our interest, partly to humble our pride. Thus he attempts to explain why the difficulties exist. He could not doubt that they were there.

The difficulties in Scripture are in proportion to its depth. Having to express

the deepest profoundest truths of the Divine nature and the union between the uncreated and the created, what wonder if language seems scarcely able to express it, or constructions bend and break beneath the burden!

2. In the second place, consider *the incompetence of the reader*.

There is a legend to the effect that when the Scriptures were to be translated into Greek, seventy men were shut in seventy separate rooms, and, when their work was finished, the translations, being compared, were identical word for word. You do not believe it? but if any seventy men in the street were bidden to derive their religion from the Book alone, is it more probable that they would arrive at the same result? These seventy Jews were at least members of one and the same religious communion. Think of the differences which exist between ordinary men; differences of

character, of temperament, of antecedents, education or want of it; one with keen spiritual insight, another with scarcely any; one open-minded and prepared to accept the truth, another full of fierce prejudice, narrow, unrelenting: is it to be expected that these should all arrive unaided at the same interpretation? Still less can they be expected to obtain a grasp of the truth in its *completeness.* For while the Christian religion is deep and comprehensive, the ordinary mind is weak and narrow. Is it not a fact that men gather from independent study of the Bible just those truths or aspects of the truth which are congenial to their temperament, antecedents, and spiritual experience, often to the exclusion of other truths no less certain and no less momentous? Men read the Bible to find in it pretty much what they believed before. This may be illustrated everywhere in modern literature. One man reads the Bible to find in it the

unity of God, but not the trinity of Persons; another finds the Divinity of Jesus Christ, but not the work of the Holy Ghost; another finds the work of the Holy Ghost in the Bible, but not in the Church; another derives from it certain external rites, but fails to see their inward reality; another finds a system of morality, but not the doctrinal facts upon which the morality is based. Thus independent reading of the Bible does not lead to completeness. It gives, as a fact of experience, fragments of the truth. This is not the fault of the Book, of course; for the Scriptures are perfect. It is the incompetence of the reader.

3. In the third place, consider the *purpose of the writers.*[26] Were the books of the New Testament written to convert the heathen, or to instruct the believer? Plainly they must be very differently written according as the one or the other object was held in view. If you are writing to a friend on

the affairs of a society of which you both are members, you will not need to prefix to your letter an account of its rules and practices: he will know them as well as you. A hint, a phrase, an allusion, a technical word will be for him sufficient. He will read between the lines. He will understand your point of view. But if the letter fall into the hands of a stranger, ignorant of the society's practice and principles, he will obviously be at a serious disadvantage. He will run great risk of considerable mistakes. He will often miss the point, and put upon your sentences a construction widely different from your meaning. Is it not so when men read the Scripture apart from the mind and practice of the Church? For consider: the purpose of the writers, what was it? Do they write to the world or to the Church? Plainly they write to the Church, to members of the same Society with themselves, to men generally

acquainted with the Christian practice and the Christian Faith. St. John writes to the seven Churches which are in Asia; St. Paul to the Church at Corinth, to the Church at Ephesus. St. Luke's Gospel is intended for those already within the fold. "In order that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been already instructed."[a] St. Luke presupposes in Theophilus a knowledge of the Christian Faith. St. Paul's first letter to Corinth is a series of answers to a series of questions. But the questions are not asked by pagans or Jews; they are asked by the Church at Corinth: the writer and the reader alike belong to the same spiritual Society. He will, therefore, rightly take much for granted. They will understand his references, his use of phrases and words already consecrated to special Christian significance. The writer of the Epistle to

[a] St. Luke i. 4.

the Hebrews assures his readers that by this time they themselves "ought to be teachers;" that if they have need that one teach them again which be "the first principles of the oracles of God," it is certainly not what might reasonably be expected, and certainly by no means to their credit, and only because they have been "dull of hearing."[a] And he declines to dwell for the future upon the "first principles of the doctrine of Christ," he determines to go on to the deeper mysteries of the Faith. Now, all this shows that his object was manifestly not to give first instruction to men entirely ignorant of the Faith, but to give higher teaching to those already familiar with the Church's practices and the Church's Faith.

Hence we conclude that, if men take the Bible and, ignoring the faith and practices of the Church, endeavour to derive their

[a] Heb. v. 12.

religion entirely from its pages, they are putting the Book to a use for which it was never intended. They misunderstand its purpose, which was not to give primary instruction to the ignorant, but secondary instruction to the believer. To understand the Bible, one must be in the Church. Only there can the common standpoint between the writer and the reader really be found. Only there can the purpose of the Apostles be really fulfilled.

II.

From these three points, then, from the difficulty of the Book, the incompetence of the reader, the purpose of the writers, we conclude that the true interpreter of the Bible is not the individual. Who, then, is it? All the drift of our inquiry is towards the conclusion that the true interpreter of the Word of God is *the Church* of God.[27]

1. See this in *the first generation.* The Ethiopian officer, driving home in his carriage after service at Jerusalem, is reading the prophet Isaiah—the grand passage, "He is led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth." "Understandest thou what thou readest?" asks St. Philip. The answer: "How can I, except some man should guide me?" Then St. Philip explains. But—and here is the point—in what capacity? Does he come as a private individual to say, "I have studied that passage for years, and this is what I think it means"? Far from that. St. Philip was not there to propose his own views and theories and opinions. Like any minister of the gospel, he was the mouthpiece of the Catholic Church, to deliver the Faith once entrusted to the saints. And in the light of the Church's Faith he explains the Scriptures. Thus already the Church is the interpreter of the Bible.

2. Is the objection raised: "That was all very well while the Apostles lived, but what when they were dead?" Pass, then, to *the second generation.* The Apostles are dead, but their disciples live. If difficulties arose about the meaning of scripture, what more natural than to turn to the man whom the Apostles trained and taught? "You, there, Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, upon whose boyish head it was thought the Lord Himself laid hands of benediction; you, at any rate, who knew intimately the Evangelist, St. John; you who may often have heard St. Paul preach; you who occupy the very place where St. Peter sat but a few years since; you in whose ears their unwritten words must still be ringing; you who derived from them all your knowledge of the Church's practice and the Church's Faith—tell us what did St. John mean here. What would St. Paul do in such a case as this?"

It is no romance, but actual history.

There is a Bishop in a town in France [a] in the year 200 after Christ. He is old now, and looks back to the days of his youth in Asia. He writes, "I have a more vivid recollection of what occurred at that time than of recent events, . . . so that I can even describe the place where the blessed Polycarp [a disciple of St. John] used to sit and discourse—his going out, too, and his coming in—his general mode of life, and his personal appearance, together with the discourses which he delivered to the people; also how he would speak of his familiar intercourse with John [the Evangelist], and with the rest of those who had seen the Lord; and how he would call their words to remembrance."

Plainly, then, in the second generation the Church interpreted the Bible.

3. Is it said, "This, too, was the privilege of one generation"?

[a] St. Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons.

Look again. It is *the third generation.* Apostles are dead. Their disciples are dead. But the Church is there. Churches exist in every city. Through the Syrian towns, the Greek provinces, along the Mediterranean, far away into the extremity of the West, Churches have risen. They differ in language, in nationality. They are parted by mountain, river, and sea. But there is among them all a strong resemblance, a striking family likeness. They are sisters. Their convictions are the same. Their practices are the same; substantially, they are identical. Their worship, their face and features, are one and the same. Already, their faith is summarized into certain short Creeds. Now, what does this identity, this agreement mean, between Churches so widely separate? They cannot all have agreed to go astray. They cannot all alike have departed from the truth. Had they diverged from the Apostles they

would also have differed from each other.[28] Thus their agreement is a striking witness to their truth. They are what they are because the Apostles made them so. They teach what they teach, because this was what the Apostles taught them. The Apostles are gone, and their disciples are gone; but their work remains.

If, then, a question arose about the meaning of the Apostles' words, what more natural than to compare them with the Apostles' work? Here was the living interpretation. It was the Church which necessarily decided what the mind of the Apostles really was.

4. Or consider the method pursued in the *early missions of the Church.* The Church did not begin by a distribution of the Scriptures; but first the Church taught its Faith, a simple summary of Christian truth: of God in His own nature, the Holy Trinity; of God in his relation to men,

the Holy Incarnation. Then the Church taught its practices, and afterwards placed in the convert's hands the Holy Scriptures, "in order that thou mayest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been already instructed." If, then, the question, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" had to be answered, "How can I, except some man should guide me?" to whom should the convert turn for explanation, unless to that Church which gave him the Scriptures, that Church which had given him the Faith, that Church in which the Scriptures had originated, and in which the Scriptures were gathered together? Thus, still, the Church was the Interpreter of the Bible.

5. And *down the course of the Church's history* the principle, for centuries at least, was always the same. True that the special advantage of having instruction from the Apostles was only the privilege of a passing

generation, but the main principles of the Incarnation were deeply rooted in every portion of the Church of Christ. The Church perpetually looked back. Its attitude was continually, "I delivered unto you that which I also received." The function of the Church was to witness to the faith once for all delivered, and to transmit that faith unchanged to succeeding generations. And when error arose, the chief pastors of the Churches gathered in council together, to witness to the Faith inherited from the beginning, to declare, "This is what our fathers taught us; this is what the doctrine of the Church has always been: we will have no novelties, but the unchanging Faith." And they recorded their conviction in the language of the Nicene Creed. Thus, three hundred years after the Incarnation, the Church is the interpreter of the Bible.

III.

In modern Christianity this aspect of the truth is frequently forgotten, namely, that the mind of Christ is represented in the Faith and convictions of the Society, as well as in the statements of the Book. The Church and the Bible are both alike the outcome of the Apostles' work,[29] under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. The Word of God does not only find its expression in Scripture, it no less finds expression in the principles and practices of the Church. The Church and the Bible are both Divine creations. If only this truth were really grasped, innumerable controversies would at once be ended. The Church was a living exposition of the mind of Christ. Its Faith was derived, not from the Scriptures, but from the Apostles themselves, and through them, from the Lord Himself. Historically existing before the New Testament, being,

in fact, the original form which Christianity assumed upon its first appearance in social life, the relationship of the Church to the Bible is that of one Divine work to another; and it can never be in the interests of truth that one-half of the truth should be ignored.

Apply this principle to the nineteenth century. Two modern readers approach the Bible, as they think, in a perfectly independent spirit, unbiassed by the prejudice and superstitions of the past. They will discover for themselves, and possibly publish to the world, the pure unadulterated gospel in all its integrity. They study for years, and finally rise to teach—contradictions. What is to be done? What are we to say? What can we say but this? You are learned, you are very gifted, but you contradict each other, and therefore you can't both be right. Shall we have a third opinion? But it would be no more than opinion at the best. And why should you

regard his view as more decisive than your own? Have you not put the Book to a use for which it was never intended? You have treated it as if it fell from another planet, miraculously attested; whereas it has had a long history on the earth. Written in a Society, gathered by a Society, entrusted to the keeping of a Society,[30] why should we not ask the Society what it has always supposed the Book to mean?

There is a venerable Communion, the Church of the living God, white with the snows of eighteen hundred winters; certainly it is older than you; it is incomparably more experienced; it has been the mother of saints and the teacher of the wisest; it is gifted with many privileges, endowed with many powers, and the promise of perpetual guidance rests upon it from above. Shall we not inquire what is its mind upon the subject? If it be said that for eighteen centuries the Church has gone

astray, what assurance have we that the nineteenth century is not also in their company? Can you expect us to believe that a guidance not possessed by the world-wide Church from first to last has somehow enlightened you? If there be any certainty on earth, surely it must be in the permanent faith and practice of the world-wide Church. The permanent faith and practice of the world-wide Church—it is to this that the English Communion makes its continual appeal.

And here may be mentioned the common objection, that to make the Church the interpreter of the Bible is in effect to place the *Church* above the Bible. May it not be justly replied, that to make the individual the interpreter of the Bible is to place the *individual* above the Bible?

It is really a question between rival interpreters of the Bible. We do *not* say that the Church is above the Bible. But

we *do* say that the Church is above the *individual interpreter* of the Bible, and that when these two, the Church and the individual, disagree, it is the judgment of the individual which must be corrected by that of the world-wide Church.

Holy Scripture most assuredly "containeth all things necessary to Salvation."[31] That this is precisely what the early Christian writers say, can be amply attested. "The Scripture is perfect, and most abundantly of itself sufficient for all things," so says St. Vincent, and his language would certainly be endorsed by the early Church. But it is no less certain that, while believing Holy Scripture to contain all things necessary to salvation, they did not believe the Scripture so to contain them as that any individual would be capable of his own unguided effort of unfailingly eliciting the entire Christian Faith and practice from its pages. They assert, in the plainest terms,

that the incompetence of the individual renders this impossible. They teach that the Church enlightens where the individual fails ; in short, that "the Church has authority in controversies of the Faith."[32]

IV.

Let us try to make of this general principle some *particular applications.* Our appeal is to the permanent Faith and practice of the world-wide Church.

1. The Scripture represents our Lord as saying, "I and My Father are one." Did He mean to assert His own Divinity? "Yes," says one; "No," says another. "He could not possibly, being human, have intended to assert His equality with the Uncreated," says a third. Interpreters differ. We appeal, then, to the permanent faith of the world-wide Church. While St. John was still alive there was a Roman

magistrate[a] who made inquiries as to the Church's Faith. He discovered that they met together early in the morning, bound themselves by a Sacrament to do no harm, and sang hymns to Christ, *as God*. There it is, the Gospel of St. John was not yet written, but the Church already taught that our Lord could and did claim equality with the Father. And we know what the Church has taught ever since. The best interpreter of the Scriptures is the permanent Faith of the world-wide Church.

2. Or again, our Lord says in the Scripture, "This is My Body." Did He assert the Real Presence? "Yes," says one; "No," says another. Interpreters differ. Let us appeal, then, to the interpretation of the Church. Within ten years of the death of St. John the Evangelist, one of his disciples[b] wrote the following sentence in reference to the Holy Eucharist: "It is the medicine of

[a] Pliny's letter to Trajan. [b] St. Ignatius.

immortality, the preventive against spiritual death." He also says that some refused to receive the Sacrament because, not believing that the Son of God became man, they could not believe that His human nature was really there. Here is the Real Presence taught within ten years of St. John. And we know that the Church has taught it ever since. We take, then, the permanent Faith of the world-wide Church.

3. Or again, it is written, "Then laid they their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost." Does this mean that all Christians ought to be confirmed? "Certainly not," say many in London to-day. "Yes," say others. Which of these are right? We ask the world-wide Church? Since the days of the Apostles, down to this hour, one of the common practices of Christendom has been the laying on of hands. There is the practical interpretation which the Church has put upon the

Bible words. He will be a bold man who thinks he can find a better interpretation of Scripture than that given in the permanent practice of the world-wide Church.

4. Or again, "When thou art converted strengthen thy brethren." "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven." Do these words mean the official infallibility of the occupant of the Roman See? "Yes," say some; "No," say others. Once more we appeal to the world-wide Church. Up to the year 1870, no part of the world-wide Church maintained that the official infallibility of any one Bishop was of faith. For that very reason, then, we reject it. It fails to comply with the test of permanence. It is not part of the permanent Faith of the world-wide Church.

V.

Hence we are led to see which of these two ways will most encourage *unity*. Independent interpretation has never been productive of unity, and in its very nature never can. Witness the mournful discords of English Christianity. The tendency of the theory is to result in so many heads, so many opinions.[33]

Moreover, high among Christian graces stands *distrust of self*. When men begin to cultivate it, they will be drawn away from the theory of independent interpretation. When men learn enough to know their ignorance; when there dawns upon them a wholesome if humiliating sense of their own incompetence to derive their faith and practice unaided from the pages of a Book expressly written with another aim in view; when they feel unable to measure the

vastness of the Faith, when they reflect upon the narrowness, the onesidedness from which but few escape, the power of temperament, the bias of antecedents, the influence of conceptions imposed upon their most impressionable years, then they will begin to meet the question, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" with the answer, "How can I, except the world-wide Church should guide me?" And upon that distrust of self will follow *a distrust of that which is merely local*, a distrust of their sect in its peculiarities and in its differences from the world-wide Church. There will come overwhelmingly the conviction that what is locally popular will vary from age to age and place to place, while that which is true must be the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

And then, and thus, will rise before the mind that glorious inspiring conception of a world-wide communion, founded eighteen

centuries ago by the Holy Ghost, braving the storms of the ages, and with us at this day; the Church with an unchanged tradition, a Church which has summarized its Faith in the permanence of the Creeds, a Church which has practised the same sacred rites and transmitted them from generation to generation; and then the believer will say, If truth be discoverable upon the earth, surely the truth is here, in the permanent faith and practice of the world-wide Church.

SERMON IV.

THE INSPIRATION[34] OF THE BIBLE.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."—2 Tim. iii. 16.

I.

The subject of inspiration is naturally regarded in two main aspects. There is a Divine element, and there is a human element in it. God is the Giver, man the recipient. And in proportion as men contemplate more or less exclusively the one or the other of these two aspects, there follow two widely contrasted theories on the nature of inspiration.

1. At the Reformation period many regarded, almost exclusively, *the Divine side* of inspiration. Then the thought of God's

share in the work overwhelmed them. There seemed no room for the agency of man. Just as the musician, presiding at the keyboard of the organ, commands and controls the instrument, producing what combinations, what chords, what melodies he will; so God was supposed to preside at the keyboard of the sacred writer's faculties. They became mere instruments. They lost their individuality. A purely mechanical theory resulted. Inspiration became the dictation of an Almighty Intelligence; every passage, every word was delivered from above. God was everything, man nothing.

This mechanical theory of inspiration undoubtedly did great service to its inventors;[35] for having recently discarded the authority of the Church, they badly needed some authority to take its place. Hence there was a practical advantage in the theory of verbal inspiration.

Further reflection, however, showed that,

if the theory was useful, it was none the less inherently impossible. The necessity of reducing man to a machine before He could entrust him to deliver a message, was virtually a reflection upon the Almighty.

Moreover, the different style of the sacred writers, their individuality and independence, the different aspects given by them of Jesus Christ, all attested the inadequacy of this mechanical theory to do justice to the facts of Scripture.

It was a well-meaning view, a pious view. It contained a considerable element of the truth. But it was all upon one side. It had an eye for God's work, but none for man's. Now, all one-sided statements of the truth are certain to avenge themselves: and the mechanical theory is to-day almost universally abandoned. But in the reaction many have gone to the opposite extreme, and they see in the Bible almost exclusively the human side.

2. The second theory, regarding things almost exclusively upon their human side, reminds us that the writers were men, and asserts that they were subject to every human limitation.

If we ask, Were they inspired? the answer given is, Certainly; for all genius is inspired. Thus the inspiration of Scripture is regarded as identical in kind with the inspiration of genius, and John Milton supposed to share the same gift as Isaiah.

Now what is meant by *the inspiration of genius?* [36]

Our attitude towards the men of genius is the best reply. You tell your inspired poet, through the pages of a review, that he has selected an unfortunate subject, unsuited to his bent, and which will not add to his reputation. You inform him that he can do better than that. You readily admit that your inspired writer mixes the false with the true. He denies God's

existence altogether, with Shelley; or with Milton compromises the doctrine of our Lord's divinity. Did God inspire the poet to deny that God exists? If "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost," did God inspire a man to deny our Lord's divinity? You feel yourself at perfect liberty to criticise all that your man of genius says; you regard his statements as liable to revision and correction at the bar of an abler mind, in the light of a clearer day. You accept his teachings just so far as they commend themselves to your own convictions, or as they appear to possess a reasonable probability. You say that this or that line is beautifully expressed but fallaciously conceived. You know that such inspired writers are the creatures of a day, that they often go entirely out of fashion, line the shelves of dusty libraries until, resuscitated in course of time by some enterprising antiquary,

they are shown to the world with a smile of superiority and wonder, as works which once were read by thousands.

And what does all this show but that inspiration of genius is only a phrase to express that God is the author of human gifts. That vivid power, that force of expression, that passion, that pathos, that insight into nature is a glorious gift of the Almighty. The inspiration of genius only means a brilliant exercise of natural endowments.

In the sense that every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, it is legitimate to say that the poet is inspired. "The inspiration of the Almighty giveth understanding." [a]

Does the inspiration of Scripture mean no more than this? Has it only a human side? When St. Peter said that holy men of old spake as they were moved by the

[a] Job xxxii. 8.

Holy Ghost, did he only intend to observe that certain individuals made a brilliant use of their natural gifts?

At any rate this is most certainly not what the prophets claim. They claim deliberately to speak God's thought, not their own; thought declared to them from Heaven; not the mere outcome of their own reflections. The word of the Lord came to them. They are the messengers, often reluctant and shrinking messengers, overwhelmed in contrasting their own personal insignificance with the magnitude of their message. Their word is, "Thus saith the Lord." The inspiration of Scripture has a Divine as well as a human side.

Such are *the two theories*, the mechanical and the literary. And it is instructive to notice that historically the one follows the other.

Different generations of men look upon

a subject from widely different points of view. Formerly they regarded it from God's side: recently on man's side. They used to see chiefly God's work in it, now they see chiefly man's. Both theories were extremes. Both contained an element of truth. But the first, with all its errors, was spiritually preferable to the second. For while the second reduced the Bible to the level of other literature, the first did strongly enforce the fact that the Bible was a message from God.

II.

The subject of inspiration has come to the front in our day probably more than in any previous century. *The recent theories* are innumerable.

We are told that some books of the Bible are more inspired, others less, others not at all. But when we ask which fall under

which division, there is considerable disagreement. And if we inquire why an uninspired book ever got in among a collection which is inspired, the answer has been given: "Just as a dark background to a picture—to present a stronger contrast to the genuine thing." One writer informs us that St. Paul's Epistles to Timothy are not inspired. His reason—because they chiefly deal with external organization of the Churches; and, since the writer does not regard external organization of much importance, he thinks that St. Paul must have been of the same opinion. We are irresistibly reminded here how Martin Luther said that the Epistle of St. James was a right strawy, that is, rubbishy letter. His dislike was based on the fact that his favourite doctrine was not to be found there. But if, as Churchmen are sometimes informed, "the Bible only is the religion of Protestants," it ought to have occurred to Luther as more becoming to

bring his own ideas into obedience to the Scriptures, than to make himself the judge of what an inspired book ought to contain. A book is not necessarily uninspired because it contains a doctrine which I dislike, or omits a doctrine which I love. It is, at least, conceivable that it is myself, and not the book, which is at fault.

Against such treatment of the Bible, two objections will occur to us.

1. *It sets the individual above the Bible.* It makes him the judge of the proper subject which an inspired book ought to contain. It enables the narrowest-minded of men to ignore unpalatable truths, by challenging the book's inspiration, instead of profiting by its largeness.

2. And, in the next place, this treatment of the Bible reduces the whole subject of inspiration to *a question of individual taste.*

Differences of temperament and early training will lead men to entirely different

opinions on the relative importance of different truths; men will therefore make different selections among the sacred writings. This appeals to me, therefore it is very much inspired: this doesn't, therefore it has no inspiration. The practical outcome is, that while the printed contents of the Bible are everywhere the same, the contents really acknowledged differ considerably. For men will in this way pass by in severe silence such portions of Scripture as fail to harmonize with their theory of inspiration. Thus the asserted bond of union among Christians—the Holy Scriptures—is shown to be virtually a different thing in different cases. The result of this theory of Inspiration is practically to create a number of different Bibles in which the accepted contents are by no means really the same. And if it comes to a question of individual taste, who will say that he would have made, if left to himself, precisely

the same selection of documents as that contained in the Canon of the Scriptures?

But the common characteristic of all these theories of inspiration is, that they *are* theories and nothing more. They are opinions of individuals or schools of thought. They vary with place and age. They cannot be required of any man as essential portions of the Faith. There is, in fact, no finality about them. They have chased each other across the stage of history. What was uppermost a century ago is neglected to-day. What is popular to-day may be ignored or vastly modified in less than a hundred years.

But our concern, as Christians, is not with the changeful opinions of the day, but with the permanent Faith of the world-wide *Church*.

III.

We have, then, to consider what the Church has to say on the subject of inspiration.

The Church gathered these Books, acknowledged them, is their keeper and their witness, has given to us the main lines of their interpretation. *Has the Church any guidance to give us on the subject of their inspiration?*

This is, for us, the main question. For us the permanent Faith of the world-wide Church will be decisive upon this as upon all other questions related to Christianity. Anything *beyond* what the Church has taught will be opinion, but nothing more. We Christians must remember this. No theory of inspiration must be imposed if the Church has not imposed it. From whatever side the theory comes there is no

obligation to accept what the Church has not defined. What must be taught from the pulpits of the Church is nothing else than the Church's Faith.

Now, the Church teaches us to sing in the Creed that the Holy Ghost spake by the Prophets, but has never defined the precise nature of inspiration. Perhaps this is explained by the fact that controversy does not largely appear upon the subject in the early centuries. Even at the Reformation period both parties alike asserted the inspiration of the Books.

But although the Church has never precisely defined, yet it has, no less certainly, not left us without guidance as to what it understands by "inspired." The world-wide Church has persistently down the ages treated the Books in a very definite way, adopting towards them an attitude which involves a very definite idea of their inspiration, an attitude which can only be

justified and explained on the ground that the mind of the Church has from the first been perfectly clear upon the subject.

1. In the first place, then, the Church has ever ascribed to these Sacred Books an *authority* ascribed to no others. Men who, as far as genius is concerned, are probably not inferior to the Apostles and four Evangelists, very learned and brilliant men, very saintly men have written books upon the same subjects as the writers of Scripture, and have often stated the very same truths as they. But the Church has never regarded them for a moment as possessing the same authority. They have been open to criticism, and, if necessary, to correction. The Church has fearlessly differed from her greatest and most learned sons, but she has ever asserted that she cannot differ from the Oracles of God. The doctrine of a Prophet, a Psalmist, an Evangelist, an Apostle, is to her at

once and for ever decisive. This is the attitude which the Church has professed down the ages.

2. This unique authority, ascribed by the Church to the Bible, is based upon the conviction of its unique inspiration. Inspiration, according to the mind of the Church, would seem to mean—

(1) *A supernatural gift.* There is the Divine element in it. Inspiration is not the brilliant exercise of natural gifts. It is not ordinary genius. It belongs to a higher than the natural order of things. Thus it separates the literature of the Bible from all other literature in the world. The rest are works of human genius. This is uniquely inspired. A supernatural gift—

(2) But yet *entrusted to certain men.* This is the human side. The writers of Scripture do not appear to be regarded by the Church as losing their individuality under the process of inspiration. They

were not overwhelmed. They were left to the independent exercise of their gifts, to clothe the truth in human language, to express themselves in their own individual way. Entrusted to certain men—

(3) And for what purpose? *Enabling them clearly to understand*—broadening out their minds, lifting them above their ordinary level, enabling them to see what others could not see, enabling them clearly to understand it. And also *faithfully to record it.* For the gift was not meant for their personal gain alone. It was granted for the service and advantage of the whole Church of God. They were enabled faithfully to record it for the ages yet untold.

(4) And what was the theme of inspiration? It was *religious truth.* The purpose of inspiration was not to teach science. Inspiration did not place the recipients in advance of the material knowledge of their time. Its object was not to anticipate the

mechanical discoveries of a later day. It was concerned with religious truth. Truths of the spiritual order, of God and man, and the Divine work in man's redemption and perfecting. Inspiration was certainly concerned with history, for God incarnate enters human history. And no less certainly inspiration is concerned in giving us *the truth.* There can be no such thing as the inspiration of inveracity. Inspiration must give us truth.

We gather, then, that the mind of the Church upon the subject seems to be that *inspiration is a supernatural gift entrusted to certain men, enabling them clearly to understand, and faithfully to record religious truth.*

But, of course, where no precise definition is given us, we must necessarily move with the greatest caution and fear. This, as all else, the preacher submits to the judgment of the Church of God.

IV.

According to the Church's mind inspiration seems to be the character of all the Books without exception. Certainly the Church never taught men that there was an uninspired book among the number. Inspiration assumes many forms, but it is invariably the cause which produced them all. They are all a work of the Holy Ghost.

There is the Inspiration of the Prophet.

Balaam stands upon the mountain, beneath him lie the tents of Israel, before him are the seven altars, beside him the elders of Moab. It is the moment of his departure. But the future bursts upon him. He sees it with appalling distinctness, as if it had already come. He sees it, and he alone can see. And he must declare it :—

> "And now, behold, I go unto my people:
> Come, therefore, and I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days.

And he took up his parable and said,
Balaam the son of Beor hath said,
And the man whose eyes are open hath said:
He hath said, which heard the words of God,
And knew the knowledge of the most High,
Which saw the vision of the Almighty,
Falling into a trance, but having his eyes open:
I shall see him, but not now:
I shall behold him, but not nigh:
There shall come a star out of Jacob,
And a sceptre shall rise ont of Israel,
And shall smite the corners of Moab,
And destroy all the children of Sheth." [a]

There is the inspiration of the prophet in its most obvious form—power to see and record the future, clearly to understand it, faithfully to record it.

There is the Inspiration of the Evangelist.

It is the power to present with perfect fidelity some aspect of the peerless Life, to recall His words, summarize His discourses, describe His actions, relate His parables; determine, for insertion or omission, what might be without irreparable loss forgotten and what remembered, what passages of

[a] Numb. xxiv. 14.

His experience or teaching would best bring home His character and present Him most faithfully to the men who never beheld Him in the flesh. Surely no easy office! Surely requiring no less inspiring aid than the work of the prophet, power to describe the present, to seize His spirit, and to speak as He would have them speak.

There is the Inspiration of the Apostle.

It is the power to draw out in his letters the consequences which flow from the fact of the Incarnation, power to draw out these results with certainty and with truth, neither swerving to the right hand nor to the left: power to teach us the Christian Faith in all its fulness and its due proportion. So that while we may challenge or doubt any individual's opinions of the Faith, we may not doubt or challenge the doctrines of an Apostle. There is a supernatural guidance here. The works of the individual are subject to revision, the writings of the Apostles are not.

V.

But here it is necessary to bear carefully in mind that *Inspiration has its limits.*

1. The Inspiration of a book *does not imply a Divine sanction for every act recorded.*

Sometimes the character of some of the Old Testament narratives is urged as *an objection*[37] against their Inspiration. But the fact is that they profess to be history, and not romance. They describe man as he is, not as he ought to be. They give the actual, not the ideal. Thus they record the sublime moments of unworthy men and the degraded moments of saints.

Man, half angel, half brute; man as we know him, capable of splendid loftiness, no less capable of unutterable meanness; man with his pathetic contradictions, so high, so low, so abject, so august, is described in Scripture with a merciless fidelity to facts.

And if Scripture did not describe him so, it would not be fact, but fiction. But as St. Augustine said long ago, such actions are "recorded but not approved." And certainly no one trained in the teachings of Jesus Christ can have much difficulty in determining whether an act of the older patriarchs and kings is written for his example or recorded for his admonition.

2. And, secondly, Inspiration *does not involve the equal value of every text.*[38] For example, consider the Book Ecclesiastes.

Ecclesiastes is the story of a young man's attempt to discover for himself what is the secret of a happy life. He sought it first in the gratification of the *senses.* He built himself an earthly paradise.[a] He devoted himself to pleasure. He surrounded himself with everything which could minister to his amusement and delight—"men singers and women singers, and the delights of the

[a] ii. 1–10.

sons of men."[a] He "gave his heart to know madness and folly."[b] For a time it satisfied. Then came the inevitable reaction. The absorbing search for selfish pleasure defeated its own object. All was vanity and vexation of spirit.[c] There was nothing better than to eat and drink.[d] Man had the same birth as the beast, and in death they were both alike.[e]

Then he sought the secret of a happy life in the gratification of the *mind*. He was gifted with great abilities, and he knew it. Ambition seized him. He would seek for wisdom. He would search into the height and the depth. Nothing escaped his keen and restless intellect, from the cedars of Lebanon to the hyssop on the wall. He wrote three thousand proverbs; his songs were a thousand and five. He determined that men should own his intellectual superiority. And he had his reward. They

[a] ii. 8. [b] i. 17. [c] ii. 11.
[d] ii. 24. [e] iii. 19.

came from all parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon. But in the midst of all this incense of adulation, what of the man himself? was he satisfied? What were the things he knew compared with the things he knew not? What lay before him but the inevitable coming of the days which would weaken the memory and deprive him of the things he loves? How dieth the wise man?—as the fool! And was that the end? "Vanity of vanities," said the preacher, "all is vanity."

And the awful sense of human transitoriness came upon him with a power wellnigh overwhelming: "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever."[a] And looking on to the time when "the evil days" would come, and "the years draw nigh" when he should be forced to say, "I have no pleasure in them," when the clouds of sorrow

[a] i. 4.

should return after the rain of tears, when the limbs, "the keepers of the house," the human body, should "tremble," and "the strong men bow themselves, and those that look out of the window (the power of sight) should be darkened;" when he should "rise up at the voice of the bird," for the least sound would disturb his resting; when he should "be afraid of that which is high," capable no more of laborious effort, no more vigorous as in the days of youth; when "fears should be in the way, and the almond-tree," the emblem of sleeplessness, "should flourish," and the merest trifle, the light "grasshopper, become a burden," and listlessness should enter and "desire should fail," and "man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets,"[a]—crushed by the pathos of human transitoriness, he uttered his piteous cry, "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity."[b]

[a] xii. 5. [b] xii. 8.

But the preacher did not stop here. Baffled in the selfish search for pleasure, whether in the gratification of the senses or the gratification of the intellect, the seeker after a happy life came back, as many a man has done since, to the belief in God, and the true secret of human peace. At last he struggles up into the conclusion of the whole matter—the utterance of triumphant faith: "Fear God, and keep His Commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."[a]

Now the cynical phrases, crude half-truths, and proverbial philosophy of a worldly shrewdness which escape the lips of Ecclesiastes repeatedly through the course of his changeful moods, while God disciplines his selfwill by bitter failure and defeat, are warnings and admonitions. They do not stand on the same spiritual level with his great conclusion when at last

[a] xii. 13.

he issues victoriously into faith. They are partly like the words of Satan in the temptation of Christ, they are partly the outcome of the struggle and the trial of a human character. But the Inspiration of the Book lies in the entire drift of its marvellous pages, presenting man everywhere unsatisfied, until he finds the permanent satisfaction of his immortal needs in the God who gave him existence.

Finally, as St. Paul insists,[a] "All scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for, correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." This is the purpose for which Inspiration was given. May we by our reverence for its pages, our constant and prayerful study of its contents so employ it; to the discipline of our character and the enlightening and guidance of the soul.

[a] 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

SERMON V.

THE CHRISTIAN VALUE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.[39]

"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning."—ROMANS XV. 4.

CERTAIN opponents of the Church in the fifth century regarded the Old Testament as of very small importance. The ground given was that the Old was imperfect while the New was perfect, and they were the fortunate possessors of the New. Some of the wisest of our teachers think that the same tendency to disparage the Old Testament exists in certain quarters in the English Church to-day. There is, we are told, a marked difference between the value frequently assigned to it among ourselves

and that assigned to it by St. Chrysostom, or St. Augustine, or St. Ambrose, or St. Jerome. Our subject, then, is the Christian value of the Old Testament. We are to see some of the grounds upon which it should be among all Christians very highly regarded.

I.

In the first place, then, the Old Testament is very valuable to the Christian because of its *doctrine of God*.

We do not find fully declared in its pages the truth that God is Love. We never realized that God is Love until we knew that God possessed a Son. Naturally so. For until then, God's love could only seem an unexercised capacity, never called forth into exercise for lack of an adequate object whereon to rest; but when we knew that within the Divine nature there was more

than one Divine personality, then we understood that God is Love. Thus, the doctrine that God is Love is based upon the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Unknown before the Christian era, unknown to-day outside Christendom except through Christian influence, the doctrine that God is Love is one of the gifts of Christianity to the world. But although the Old Testament does not properly declare that God is Love, yet still it speaks of Him in terms of singular beauty and graciousness.

Take, for instance, the Vision of Moses, when "the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." [a]

Or again, the familiar language of the Psalm—

[a] Exod. xxxiv 6.

"Like as a father pitieth his own children,
Even so is the Lord merciful to them that fear Him." [a]

But the Divine majesty, glory, wisdom, power are described in the Old Testament in terms unsurpassed even in the New:—

"Great is our Lord and great is His power:
Yea, and His wisdom is infinite." [b]

"Clouds and darkness are round about Him,
Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His seat." [c]

"Before the mountains were brought forth,
Or ever the earth and world were made,
Thou art God from everlasting, and world without end." [d]

Or recall the wonderful description of the searching presence of the Almighty.

"Such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me;
I cannot attain unto it.
Whither shall I go then from Thy Spirit?
Or whither shall I go then from Thy presence?
If I climb up into heaven, Thou art there:
If I go down to hell, Thou art there also.
If I take the wings of the morning,

[a] Ps. ciii. 13. [b] Ps. cxlvii. 7.
[c] Ps. xcvii. 2. [d] Ps. xc. 2.

> And remain in the uttermost parts of the sea;
> Even there also shall Thy hand lead me,
> And Thy right hand shall hold me." [a]

But nothing can better attest the value of the Old Testament teaching about God than *the use of the Psalms.* For well-nigh three thousand years that marvellous collection of 150 hymns has been the world's treasury of devotion. Not even the Apostles have given us much else as the Church's Book of Praise. They have been on the lips and in the heart of Christendom. Untold thousands of the truest followers of Jesus Christ have found in the Psalms, interpreted no doubt in the full light of the Christian Revelation, the adequate expression of their highest aspirations, and hopes, and praise.

First of all, then, the Old Testament is of very high value to the Christian for the sublimity of its doctrine about God.

[a] Ps. cxxxix. 6–10.

And on this ground we may say that "whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning."

II.

Secondly, the Old Testament is very important to the Christian for its *doctrine of evil.*

Corresponding to the height of its glorious teaching about God, is the depth of its conception of sin. It tells us that God made man upright, that He is not the author of evil, that everything which He made was good. Evil is not a defect of nature, nor inherent in the flesh, nor a necessity of development, much less is it eternal: it is an act of the creature's will. But it is no mere transitory action which passes away, and leaves man practically as it found him. On the contrary, it involves *permanent results:* a spiritual

loss, a moral change: death in all its forms, death of the body, and death of the soul. For human death is, according to the Scriptures, a consequence of sin. And gazing on the marble features of our dead, what else is possible than to feel the truth of it, and exclaim, An enemy hath done this! And since the human race does not consist of isolated units like the angels, but members of a body and children of a house, the loss of one is the loss of all. The first man had lost his original crown of grace. He could not transmit what he no more possessed. Hence the drama of human history unfolded on the lower platform of sorrow and sin. Piteous tendencies to wrong, the weakness of the will towards good, "the imagination of man's heart evil from his youth"[a]—these became its universal characteristics.

And hence man is burdened with a deep

[a] Gen. viii. 21.

sense of *alienation* from God. And this alienation is most keenly felt by the devoutest and best in Israel. How can man, being what he is, draw near to God, and be reconciled?

> "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord,
> And bow myself before the high God? . . .
> Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
> The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" [a]

This profound Old Testament teaching of the nature of evil is to Christianity of supreme importance, for upon that realization of sin's nature, the doctrine of Redemption is based. So long as men possess no adequate conception of the seriousness of evil, so long Redemption by the Blood and Agony of an Incarnate God must appear simple extravagance. They will regard our Lord as the great Moralist, or the great Example, but they will not regard Him as the Lamb of God taking

[a] Micah vi. 6, 7.

away the sin of the world. They will not see the necessity. Redemption makes its true appeal to us in proportion as we realize the nature of evil, and in proportion as we yearn for permanent deliverance. Hence the need of deepening our sense of sin. We must take upon our lips the passionate penitence of psalmist and prophet, making them our own as best we may, being conscious that the more we realize their truth, the better we shall understand our own Redemption.

It is, then, in the second place, for its profound teaching about evil, that the Old Testament is very valuable to the Christian. And on this ground, no less than on the former, "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning."

III.

A third value of the Old Testament to the Christian lies in its *doctrine of the Deliverer*. That wonderful people Israel never put their golden age in the past, but in the future. They believed persistently in the coming of a great Deliverer. They called Him "the desire of all nations." They pictured a time when the eyes of the blind should be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped, when the lame man should leap as an hart and the tongue of the dumb sing. They never lost this expectation. Prosperity never made them cease to long for it, nor adversity despair of it. Still onward into the future they gazed, and hoped and believed. Prophet after prophet arose from every class of the social order—they were shepherds or they were kings, they were statesmen or gatherers of sycamore fruit, they were highly cultured or

comparatively ignorant; but with a marvellous unity, each described some feature of the coming Deliverer, and this over a course of fifteen hundred years.

There is no more marvellous instance of this anticipation of the Deliverer than that given in the twenty-second Psalm—

"My God, my God, look upon me; why hast Thou forsaken me:
And art so far from my health, and from the words of my complaint? . . .
All they that see me laugh me to scorn:
They shoot out their lips, and shake their heads, saying,
He trusted in God that He would deliver him:
Let Him deliver him, if He will have him. . . .
I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint:
My heart also in the midst of my body is even like melting wax.
My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my gums:
And Thou shalt bring me into the dust of death.
For many dogs are come about me:
And the council of the wicked layeth siege against me.
They pierced my hands and my feet; I may tell all my bones:
They stand staring and looking upon me.
They part my garments among them:
And cast lots upon my vesture."

Now we know, but it can never cease to be amazing, that this description, this "poetical gospel," as St. Augustine calls it, was not written by a reporter at Calvary, but was the vision of a seer centuries before.

Moreover, the Old Testament is not only prophetic in detail here and there, but the entire sacrificial system was prophetic. The whole drift of Israel's religious life was as one perpetual prediction corresponding to the greatness of the Person whose Advent was foretold.[40]

It is for its anticipations of the Christ, for its hope of the great Deliverer, that the Old Testament is of such great value to the Christian, and for this reason also "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning."

IV.

A fourth reason for the Christian value of the Old Testament is because it shows *God's plan in history.* It shows how the way was prepared for the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. We are permitted to see in the Old Testament just that side of history which, as a rule, becomes obscured in the strife of tongues. Everywhere we see *man* in evidence. *There* we are bidden to see God. We see confusion, indeed, in the Old Testament, as everywhere else; but, through the confusion, a plan. God is there revealed as selecting a nation: His people Israel. That one people in a peculiar sense He disciplines, He teaches, He trains. Human nature in Israel exhibits its special characteristics: many unlovely, some distinctly mean; but, at any rate, intense devotion, high aspirations, thirst for God, a glorious faith. He teaches them His glory. He

reveals Himself to them as to none other beside. He creates the thirst for Himself, which He proceeds to satisfy. He teaches them how to worship. He bids them sing His praises. For century after century He cultivates in them the faculty of faith. The rest of mankind is for the period on a lower level, not really neglected if apparently cared for less. But it is in Israel in particular that human nature is disciplined into faith.

And so we come to the days when a certain maiden lived in Galilee. She was poor, but the blood of kings was in her veins. She was quite unknown beyond the limits of her village, but now known through Christendom and well known in the courts of heaven. She was highly favoured among women, and all generations shall call her blessed. She had caught the purest spirit of Hebrew psalmists, and what her devotion was may be seen in her

beautiful hymn, now the central praise in the evensong of the world-wide Church. She was gifted with many graces, and she was ordained to be the mother of our King. And a voice is heard which says—

> "A body hast Thou prepared me;
> Then said I, Lo, I come
> To do Thy will, O my God."

And of her the Son of God took flesh our flesh to be. And what He took, in taking, He cleansed and purified.

And further still, for we may venture to say that the selection of Israel was intended to create an enclosure of reverence, an atmosphere of faith, for the training of the Holy Childhood. Jesus Christ was very God, yet He passed as man through a purely human development. And while we can understand that in Mary's home He grew in wisdom as in stature, and in favour with God and man, we cannot understand, nay, it seems humanly impossible, that He

should have been born anywhere else except in Israel. We cannot conceive the Holy Childhood in a pagan home. We cannot imagine Him in any heathen residence of the imperial city, among the sceptics of Athens, or in pleasure-loving Corinth. But we may say that all Israel exists for the sake of Jesus Christ. The Law was written to furnish Him with the answers to the tempter in the wilderness; the Prophets were written in order that He might read them to the people in Capernaum, the Psalms to provide the language of His dying cry; the temple was builded that He might delight in His Father's House upon the earth; all Israel exists for Him as a sacred enclosure wherein should be trained and matured the Saviour of all the world.

It is, then, as showing the plan of God in human history, that the Old Testament is of unique importance, and that

"whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning."

V.

And, finally, the Old Testament is very valuable to the Christian for its teaching on *the principles of worship.*[41]

The worship of Israel clothed itself in outward forms. Page after page of the Mosaic Law is devoted to details of ceremonial worship. We read of altars and sacrifices, priests and vestments, incense and vessels and hangings, and the round of fast and festival.

Now, all this, some will tell us, was very unspiritual. It is, however, difficult to see how that can be said consistently with reverence. For this simple reason—it was ordained by the Almighty: "See thou make all things after the pattern shown thee on the Mount." Here is the unquestionable

fact—the divinely ordered worship intended for the spiritual training of the chosen people was an elaborate ritual. In that elaborate system, and for it, the Psalms were written; that is to say, the most spiritually-minded treasury of praise. In that solemn ritual were trained and developed the characters of a Samuel, a Hezekiah; in fact, all that was spiritually best in Israel. In this the twelve Apostles were trained, in this our Lord's own mother, in this our Lord Himself from the age of twelve to His latest hours found the adequate presentation of reverent worship. Our Lord ever rebuked unreality, but never rebuked the worship of Jerusalem. To do so would have placed His disciples in the following dilemma. Can Jesus Christ denounce what God ordained? Nor was this only till the Church was founded. The Apostles still worshipped in the temple, and did not leave it until compelled. All these facts

forbid us to label the ritual of Jerusalem as unspiritual. No! we cannot doubt that most fervent faith, most living worship, most earnest penitence were to be found among that prostrate crowd when the daily incense arose, and that the worshippers of Jerusalem went homeward comforted. Undoubtedly the prophets of Israel insisted with earnest reiteration that the ritual of Jerusalem was utterly worthless if divorced from inward reality. They exclaimed, in words which have been seriously misunderstood, "Incense is an abomination unto Me."[a] They ask, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? ... Bring no more vain oblations." But they explain their purpose when they plead fervently, passionately for inward reality. "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do

[a] Isa. i.

well." The prophet never dreamed that to suppress the externals of worship was to make men spiritual. The lawgiver was the ritualist of the period, the prophet the evangelical. But there was no opposition between them. The one insisted on the outward reverence, the other on the inward reality. No passage shows this more clearly than the fifty-first Psalm :—

> "Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it Thee:
> But Thou delightest not in burnt offerings."

Here the Psalmist seems to repudiate the externals of worship, while he adds, "The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit." Thus he insists on the inward reality. But then he returns to the very externals which a moment before in his zeal for righteousness he might appear to disparage. "Then shalt Thou be pleased with the sacrifice of righteousness, with the burnt offerings and oblations: then shall they offer young

bullocks upon Thine altar." Modern worship must always present the same two aspects—the outward expression and the inward reality. What is essential is to remember that these two are not contradictory, but supplemental. The so-called ritualist and the so-called evangelical ought never to be opponents, but friends. They are insisting on two aspects of the selfsame truth ; but, alas for our narrowness ! one aspect is often almost too much for the human mind. It is most true that outward ritual is absolutely worthless except it be accompanied by the devotion of the inner man. But it is no less true that human beings must ever express their social worship in outward forms. Human language itself is an outward form. The barest worship on earth is not necessarily spiritual. The most elaborate worship on earth is not necessarily unspiritual. Do what you will, you cannot possibly get rid of outward

forms. They may vary in elaborateness, but they cannot be dispensed with altogether. God is a Spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth; but this has nothing whatever to do with the particular form in which human worship may find its outward expression. Nor can we consistently sing, "O come, let us worship and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker," and then go out and say that outward ritual is a matter of complete indifference. The only question is in the selection of outward forms—whether, by an exaggerated individualism, we shall be guided by private taste, or whether we shall pay regard to the immemorial practices of the world-wide Church.

Thus the lesson of the Old Testament would take the form of a reminder that human worship must ever continue an inward reality with an outward expression.

Moreover, the whole principle of Old Testament worship was from first to last *sacrificial.* The one idea of an Israelite, when drawing near to worship the Almighty, was to offer Him a sacrifice. This was the principle of the Law. But it did not originate with Moses. The very earliest recorded human worship outside Eden took the form of a sacrifice. Moreover, our Lord Himself declared that He came, not to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil them. If, then, the details are altered, the principles remain. The details naturally change. Those of Israel pointed forward to Christ, those of the Church point back to Him. Naturally, therefore, the details altered, but the principles remain. The worship of the Christian Church is, like that of Israel, essentially sacrificial.

When, on the night before He died, our Lord, in the presence of His Apostles in the Jerusalem Chamber, after the sacrifice

of the Passover was completed, said, "This Cup is the *New* covenant in My Blood," they could scarcely avoid, considering their antecedents, their lifelong training in sacrificial principles, understanding Him to mean that by this act He was, in the place of the older sacrifice, instituting a new.

Hence it was that the idea of sacrifice in worship was so strong in the early Church. Already, long before St. John's death, St. Clement of Rome could describe the clergy as those who offer the Oblation; and only ten years after St. John's departure St. Ignatius speaks of sacrifice as the familiar title for the worship of the Christian Church.

Thus a fifth value of the Old Testament is its teaching on the unchanging principles of human worship.

From all these considerations, far as they are from exhausting the subject, we learn the great value of the Old Testament to the

Christian reader. It was the Old Testament of which St. Paul said that it was able to make them wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

A real grasp of the different aspects of the New Testament is impossible without a knowledge of the Old. The Sermon on the Mount presupposes it. St. Paul's teaching constantly does the same. The whole drift of the sacrificial and priestly argument in the Epistle to the Hebrews is more or less unintelligible without some knowledge of the Old Testament. Hence we must not cut our Bible in half. The New Testament is hidden in the Old, the Old is revealed in the New. And both are "written for our learning."

SERMON VI.

THE DEVOTIONAL USE OF THE BIBLE.

"My study shall be in Thy statutes."—Psa. cxix. 48.

Our purpose throughout has been to consider the relationship between the Book and the Society, the Bible and the Church.

We saw that God's Revelation of Himself to man was entrusted to a Society and recorded in a Book.[a] We saw that the parts of the New Testament originated in the Church, and that by the Church they were gathered together.[b] We saw that the Church had laid down the general lines for the Book's Interpretation.[c] We asked of the Church for its idea of what is meant

[a] Serm. i. [b] Serm. ii. [c] Serm. iii.

by the Inspiration of Holy Scripture.[a] We considered the Christian use of the older Testament.[b] And consistently with the principle adopted throughout, which was to ask the Church about the Canon, about their interpretation, about their Inspiration, we come now to ask, what has the Church to teach us about their devotional use?

I.

In the first place, then, *the Church reads the Bible every day.* Where there is a daily Mattins and Evensong, four chapters of the Holy Scriptures are publicly repeated. Where there is also a daily Eucharist, six passages are daily read. The result is that a very large portion of the entire Bible is read aloud in the services every year. Attendance at the services is not everywhere and always possible, but the Church

[a] Serm. iv. [b] Serm. v.

would seem to point as our ideal the reading of the Bible every day.

> "Lord, what love have I unto Thy Law!
> All the day long is my study in it,"

said the Psalmist,[a] when he reflected upon the possession of the Law of Moses; what would he have said had he possessed the four Gospels? "Able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus," said St. Paul[b] of the Old Testament: in what terms shall the Christian describe the value of the New? "These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God," says a writer of a Gospel;[c] but to have this effect they must be read. Possession of a Bible is no guarantee for a knowledge of its contents. We draw a favourable contrast between ourselves and another Communion on the ground that we possess the open Book, but we must beware of resting contented with

[a] Ps. cxix. [b] 2 Tim. iii. 15. [c] St. John xx. 31.

its possession without adequate realization of what it contains. The multiplicity of modern literature has a tendency to displace the Bible. It is sometimes said, They formerly read the Scriptures, but then they had no daily newspapers. We must also beware of reading books about the Bible in place of reading the Bible itself. No devotional books ever written by the saintliest servant of Jesus Christ can ever be an adequate substitute for the devotional use of the Books which holy men of old wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. The Bible should be read every day. In one of the noblest lives of the nineteenth century, that of Coleridge Patteson, we are told how as a schoolboy at Eton he read his Bible every day. It is true that he kept a Shakespeare on the table under which to conceal his Bible should any unwelcome visitor burst into the room: praying at the corners of the

streets being no temptation to our English reserve. But at any rate he read it, and laid the foundation for that knowledge of Scripture which distinguished him when he became a man. And in the last week of his life we find him reading the Acts of the Apostles daily to the crew on board his vessel in the South Pacific; until with St. Stephen's dying prayer almost upon his lips he went out himself to meet a martyr's death. I would say to any schoolboy, read your Bible every day. You will be very glad you did so when you become a man. May it then be said of you, as it was said of another, "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures."

II.

In the second place, *the Church reads the Bible in all its main divisions.*

These main divisions are three—the Old

Testament, the Apocrypha, and the New. The Christian value of the Old Testament, as we have already seen, consists chiefly in its doctrine of God, its doctrine of evil, its doctrine of the Deliverer, its description of the paving the way for the Incarnation, its principles of worship. The value of the New Testament will not be challenged by any believer in Jesus Christ. But the value of the Apocrypha has been in practice seriously called in question.

The omission of the Apocrypha [42] from our copies of the Bible rests on no authority of the Church. It seems, moreover, quite inconsistent with the words of our own Communion, that the Church reads them for example of life and instruction of manners. And since the Apocrypha is read in the daily lessons in Church for a month out of every twelve, unless your copy of the Bible contained it you would not be able to follow the Scripture reading of your

own Communion. Moreover, the omission of the Apocrypha is a serious loss from another point of view, for it is the connecting link between the Old Testament and the New. Not to read it is to have our minds a perfect blank on the period between the last of the Prophets and the first of the Evangelists. And for its own sake should the Apocrypha be highly valued. No doubt it contains moral statements which fall far short of the teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, but so does the Old Testament, and this was inevitable in a progressive revelation. But, on the other hand, there is the lesson for St. Luke's Day, "Honour a physician;" the lesson for All Saints, "Let us now praise famous men;" the Offertory Sentence, "Be merciful after thy power;" the Benedicite, that hymn of praise for all creation;—there are passages of proverbial wisdom, like the following rebuke of a shallow character—

"The heart of fools is in their mouth,
But the mouth of the wise is in their heart;" [a]—

there are the words on the origin of death—

"God created man to be immortal,
And made him to be an image of His own eternity.
Nevertheless through envy of the devil came death into the world:
And they that do hold of his side do find it;" [b]—

there is the soul-stirring faith of the Maccabees, observed as a festival in the early Church, and upon which many of the saintly writers of Christendom have preached,—

"They that put their trust in Him shall understand the truth:
And such as be faithful in love shall abide in Him:
For grace and mercy is to His saints,
And He hath care for His elect;" [c]—

[a] Ecclus. xxi. 26. [b] Wisd. ii. 23, 24.
[c] Wisd. iii. 9.

or there is the glorious passage on the souls of the righteous—

"The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God,
And there shall no torment touch them.
In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die:
And their departure is taken for misery,
And their going from us to be utter destruction:
But they are in peace.
For though they be punished in the sight of men,
Yet is their hope full of immortality.
And having been a little chastised,
They shall be greatly rewarded:
For God proved them,
And found them worthy for Himself;" [a]

or there is the following passage from the Book Baruch—

"Be of good cheer, O my children, cry unto the Lord,
And He shall deliver you from the power and hand of the enemies.
For my hope is in the Everlasting, that He will save you;
And joy is come unto me from the Holy One,
Because of the mercy which shall soon come unto you from the Everlasting, our Saviour.
For I sent you out with wailing and weeping:
But God will give you to me again with joy and gladness for ever." [b]

[a] Wisd. iii. 1–5. [b] Baruch iv. 21–23.

To recall such passages to our memories, is to remind ourselves of the value of the most neglected portion of the Bible. And the Church, by its practice of reading the Apocrypha, as well as the Old Testament and the New, would teach us, as individual believers, to do the same.

III.

In the third place, *the Church reads all the different writers of the Bible.*

Most individuals have their favourite Apostle or their favourite Evangelist. And this is natural and right;[43] for, as we saw upon a previous occasion, the Gospels were written for different classes of men, and intended to present different aspects of the peerless Life. There is the Gospel of the promised King; the Gospel of Divine power and activity; the Gospel of human sympathy; the Gospel of the deepest inner

truths: and these will naturally appeal differently to different men, according to their temperament or their education. The question, Which is your favourite Gospel? is always an interesting one, and the reply is, to some extent, a revelation of our character and tendencies.

But while it is natural to have our favourite authors in the Bible as well as in ordinary literature, yet the exclusive reading of favourite scriptures is unadvisable;[44] for, the fact is, that most men are more or less distinctly one-sided. Men often complain of their memory, seldom of their judgment; yet their memory, of which they complain, is sufficient for practical purposes, while their judgment, of which they do not complain, is exceedingly imperfect—a right judgment in all things being one of the rarest of gifts. Thus, men fail in power of discrimination, and in a sense of proportion. There are truths men

like and truths they dislike, truths which appeal to them and truths that repel, according to temperament, antecedents, education, and their own religious experience. Some truths have been brought home to them by their personal needs, for other truths they cannot see the necessity. Hence it is that men read those scriptures in which their favourite truths are contained, while they ignore those scriptures which contain other truths no less important, but to their minds unattractive or even repulsive. It is perfectly amazing how much of the Bible has been, both by individual men and entire schools of thought, passed over in severe silence, just as completely ignored as if it did not exist.[45]

Plainly the remedy for all this one-sidedness, is to read those scriptures which least appeal to us.

The Lutheran, familiarized with the doctrine of justification by faith, ought to put

himself to school in the Epistle of St. James, there to read the correlative doctrine of justification by works. Only he must not read it as Luther did, with expressions of impatience and contempt, but with a submissive and teachable mind, prepared to broaden out his ideas to the fulness of the Scriptures, rather than to reduce the Scriptures to the limits of his ideas.

The Nonconformist, clearly seeing the individual aspect of Christianity, that religion consists in personal relationship with our Lord, ought to study carefully the pastoral epistles, to grasp the social aspect of the faith. Only he must not read them, as has recently been done, to say that, since they deal with organization, they are uninspired; rather he must strive to grasp both aspects of the truth, and to see that, while union with God is the purpose of religion, yet religion is advanced through the ministration of our fellow-men.

Similarly the Puritan ought to study reverently the details of the ceremonial law, to learn thoroughly the importance of the outward expression of our worship: while the Ritualist ought to read the evangelical prophets in order to realize more profoundly the utter worthlessness of external accuracy if parted from the offering of the inner self.

And, in fact, all men require instruction in uncongenial truths. "If I knew an unpopular truth, I should proclaim it," says a French writer. That is easily done. The difficulty is to get people to read uncongenial truths for themselves. We are, then, to correct the onesided tendencies of our imperfect nature by reading the Scripture truths we care for less, rather than those we love.

Is your favourite Gospel St. Luke? Read St. John. Is it St. John's Epistle which attracts you most? Read St. Paul.

In this way we broaden out beyond our narrow limitations.

We have been sometimes told that the history of Christianity falls into three ages: the age of St. Peter, that of authority, extending from the first to the Reformation; the age of St. Paul, that of justification by faith, extending from the Reformation down to now; the age of St. John, that of love, which is to be the characteristic of the Church of the future. Now, this theory is a crucial instance of that lamentable onesidedness which it is the purpose of the Church to correct. Authority, and faith, and love are simultaneous, not successive, truths. They are not heirs, but partners; they must not follow the one upon the other's decease, rather must they co-exist. The Church must present them all together blended in their due proportion, and nothing else than this would be Christianity. And the example of the Church is here our

correction. For the Church has no favourite Apostle, no favourite Evangelist. She reads impartially St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. John.

IV.

In the fourth place, the Church reads the Books *consecutively.*

The Church takes a Gospel and reads it through, chapter after chapter, day by day, from beginning to end.

And this, surely, was the purpose for which they were originally written. The comparison of Gospel with Gospel, and the harmonizing different passages has great value; but a Gospel was originally intended to be read for its own sake, by itself. And, certainly, only when read consecutively can its special aspect be understood.

In perfect keeping with this, we find that many of the greatest teachers in Christendom would preach systematically

on entire books of the Bible. Many of the sermons of St. John Chrysostom consist of expository lectures on the Gospels, Acts, and Epistles of St. Paul. And we can well understand that under such a system the contents of the Scriptures would be widely known among the people.

The systematic study of the Scriptures is the lesson which the Church would here impress upon us.

V.

Fifthly, *the Church reads selected passages of the Bible.*

It takes a few verses for the Epistle and Gospel for the day, and it repeats those passages at the daily Eucharist for a week, thereby suggesting to us another most important use of the Holy Scriptures, which is repeated reflection upon its words.

Careful reflection upon the sacred words is most essential; for the truth which they

contain is great, and cannot readily, all at once, in its fulness, without an effort be made our own. Consider, for instance, the following: "The Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." These words will probably mean widely different things to different individuals in any assembly of human beings. To some they will sound only as the far-off utterance of another man's fervid faith, to others as rather suggesting what we ought to feel than what actually represents our state of mind; to others they will be as deep answering to deep—the deep of the Word of God to the deep of human need. Why the difference? Surely because some are content with a conventional hearing, while others take the words into solemn and earnest reflection.

No great truth was ever appropriated by a human being without a very definite effort of the will. Truths of the material

order need to be realized before they are made our own. The vastness of the starry spheres is certainly not grasped without concentration and effort. And if that be the case with truths of nature, much more is it so with truths of the spiritual and celestial order. We must fix our minds upon them; we must give ourselves up to them. And in no other way can they be really appropriated and made our own.

We read in the lives of the saints how some of the best disciples of the faith would take some brief sentence of the Holy Writings, and go out into the fields or into the woods, and there, hour after hour, reflect upon the mystery of their meaning; and at the close did not dream for a moment that they had seen into half the depth which the wondrous words of inspiration contained.[46]

Your own experience will endorse it, that careful and prayerful meditation upon the Holy Scriptures marvellously clears the

depth of meaning. The conditions of our modern life render such quiet reflection difficult. Yet we, too, can sometimes take the sacred sentences into our companionship when we walk by the way.

And although the Scriptures have a marvellous power, even for the worldly-minded, yet their special force is reserved for those who most reflect upon them. When we have read the Bible at the bedside of the dying, we know that this power for comfort and support is in proportion to the use which has been made of them in the habits of the previous life. "To him that hath shall be given," and it is nowhere more verified than in the reverent habitual reader of the Oracles of God.

VI.

And, finally, *the Church repeats the Bible as an act of praise.*

Chiefly in the Psalms. It is wonderful how the Psalms provide for the changeful moods of human life. There are psalms of youth :—

> "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?
> Even by ruling himself after Thy word."

There are psalms of age :—

> "I have been young, and now am old;
> Yet saw I never the righteous forsaken."

There are psalms of marriage, psalms of childhood, psalms of sickness, psalms of recovery, psalms of penitence and psalms of praise, psalms of despondency and psalms of joy, psalms of lamentation, psalms for the burial of the dead.

Every phase of human life may find in the Psalms its appropriate, its adequate expression. Holy Scripture is suitable to each phase of human life: it is no less suitable to every class of human character. It may be said that the great and the small are there, and the Lord is the maker of

them both. Learned and simple alike hear voices from the Psalms, and understand them.

> "All beasts of the field drink thereof:
> And the wild asses quench their thirst."

Nor is it less marvellous to note the spiritual appeal to the varying needs of the individual soul in the psalms for the day. Certainly the psalms come home to us with penetrating power. More especially is this the case when approached with a ready mind, when we say, "Speak! for Thy servant heareth," or, "I will hear what the Lord God will say concerning me." To the religious mind which trains itself to a spiritual use of these psalms, they will constantly come home with a living reality, with searching question, with soul-piercing cry, with pathetic entreaty, with solemn denunciation, with earnest warning, with language of counsel, rebuke, or sympathy. Some thrilling sentence finds us

out, invades and disturbs our miserable self-content, or brings us the sweet promise of future peace. Sometimes they seem to say, "Come up hither," as in some magnificent outburst of praise the psalm ascends to the very throne of the uncreated God, and we falteringly attempt to echo the words and creep after the eagle flight as best we may, while it shames one's earthliness and gives the ideal of what human adoration, by the grace of God, might be.

These are a few of the devotional uses which the Church has made of the Bible. And in following the guidance of the world-wide Church, we are liberated from our natural onesidedness and partialities. In accordance with the Church's mind we know that we must be right. Upon these lines, then, we take the practical outcome of our subject—"My study shall be in Thy statutes."

NOTES.

NOTES TO SERMON I.

1, page 3. Cf. Auberlen, "The Divine Revelation," p. 147.

2, p. 8. Cf. an able description in Quinet, "Le Génie des Religions."

3, p. 9. Cf. Sanday's Bampton Lectures; Wordsworth, "Inspiration of Holy Scripture."

4, p. 11. Progressive Revelation: cf. Mozley, "Ruling Ideas."

5, p. 12. Perowne, "Hulsean Lectures on Immortality."

6, p. 13. Cf. Hutton's "Theological Essays."

7, p. 16. On the finality of the Christian Revelation, cf. St. Vincent of Lerins.

"What is meant by 'Keep that which is entrusted to thy charge?' Keep it (quoth he) for fear of thieves, for danger of enemies, lest when men be asleep, they oversow tares among that good seed of wheat, which the Son of man hath sowed in his field. 'Keep' (quoth he) 'that which is entrusted to thy charge.' What is meant by this 'Keep that which is entrusted to thy charge'? that is, that which is committed to thee, not that which is invented of thee: that which thou hast received, not that which thou hast devised; a thing not of wit, but of learning; not of private assumption, but of public tradition; a thing brought to thee, not brought

forth of thee; wherein thou must not be an author, but a keeper; not a beginner, bnt a follower; not a leader, but an observer. 'Keep that which is entrnsted to thy charge.' Preserve the talent of the Catholic faith safe and undiminished; that which is committed to thee, let that remain with thee, and that deliver. Thou hast received gold, render then gold; I will not have one thing for another; do not for gold render either impudently lead, or craftily brass; I will not the show, but the very nature of gold itself. O Timothy, O Priest, O Teacher, O Doctor, if God's gift hath made thee meet and sufficient for thy wit, exercise, and learning, be the Besaleel of the spiritnal tabernacle, engrave the precions stones of God's doctrine, faithfully set them, wisely adorn them, give them brightness, give them grace, give them beanty. That which men before believed obscurely, let them by thy exposition understand more clearly. Let posterity rejoice for coming to the understanding of that by thy means, which antiquity without that nnderstanding had in veneration. Yet for all this, in such sort deliver the same things which thou hast learned, that albeit thou teachest after a new manner, yet thou never teach new things.

"But peradventure some will say, 'Shall we then have no advancement of religion in the Chnrch of Christ?' Surely let us have the greatest that may be. For who is either so envions of men, or hateful of God, which would labour to hinder that? but yet in snch sort that it may be truly an increase in faith, and not a change: since this is the nature of an increase, that in themselves severally things grow greater; bnt of a change, that something be turned, from one thing which it was, to

another which it was not. Fitting it is, therefore, that tho understanding, knowledge, and wisdom, as well of every man in particular, as of all in common, as well of one alone, as of the whole Church in general, shonld by the advance of ages abundantly increase and go forward, but yet for all that, only in its own kind and nature; that is, in the same doctrine, in the same sense, in the samo judgment" (St. Vincent of Lerins, pp. 62–64).

8, p. 17. Promises to the Church are conditional: cf. Gore, "Mission of the Church."

9, p. 19. For Roman teaching on the subject of restricting the faithful from reading the Scriptures, cf. Hurter's "Compendium."

10, p. 19. Cf. Gore, "Lux Mundi," and "Mission of the Church."

11, p. 20. On the result of separating the work of the Holy Spirit in Scripture from His work in the Church, see "Lux Mundi," p. 340; Coleridge, "Remains," iii. 93, iv. 118; Hare, "Mission of the Comforter," ii. 468.

"God will not lead and instruct men by the Scriptures alone; He employs also His Spirit and the Church: therefore He has given His word in a form which can be sufficient to lead into all truth only in connection with the other guides.

"The Scriptures alone, without the Spirit, would not be a sufficient guide; but, again, the Spirit and His inward illumination, without the Scriptures, would bo insufficient to preserve from error" (quoted in Auberlen, "The Divine Revelation," p. 247).

Historically the Church preoedes the Bible. Pfleiderer represents Lessing as saying—

"Die Bibel ist nicht das Christenthum, denn das

Christenthum bestand schon lange, ehe es eine Bibel gab; es wurde Jahrhunderte hindurch nicht durch Schrift, sondern durch mündliche Mittheilung verbreitet, und für die ganze alte Kirche galt nicht die Bibel, sondern die sogenannte 'Glaubensregel,' dieser summarische Inbegriff der kirchlichen Tradition, als die höchste dogmatische Autorität und Instanz bei Glaubensstreitigkeiten" (Otto Pfleiderer, "Religionsphilosophie," pp. 5, 6).

Historically the Church precedes the New Testament: "We are not arguing for this, and saying that this ought to have been; but that it actually was, and is. In point of fact, Christianity in no sense first sprang from the documents of the New Testament, but they from it, just as the Law of Moses had been 430 years later than the Religion of Abraham (Gal. iii. 17). The Baptising, the Liturgy, the different Orders, the Laying on of Hands in several ways, the Doctrine, the Discipline, the Excommunications, the Lord's Day, the Membership of Infants, Exomologesis, Prayer, the entire Christianity came into being quite apart from St. Matthew's Gospel, or St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, or the Revelation of St. John" (William J. Irons, D.D., "The Bible and its Interpreters," p. 151).

NOTES TO SERMON II.

12, p. 26. Cf. Bishop Westcott on the Canon.

13, p. 28. On our Lord's preparing for the founding of His Church, see Scott-Holland, "Creed and Character;" Gore, "Church and Ministry."

14, p. 28. Cf. Scott-Holland, "Creed and Character;" Gore, "Mission of the Church;" Bruce, "Training of the Twelve."

15, p. 30. Cf. Dr. Liddon's "Bampton Lectures."

16, p. 31. Cf. Moberly, "The Great Forty Days."

17, p. 33. On the Divine character of the visible Church, cf. Gore, "Mission of the Church."

18, p. 35. The origin of the Books has been admirably described by Bougaud, "Le Christianisme et les Temps Presents," tom. ii.; see also Bishop Westcott, "Introduction to the Gospels."

19, p. 43. Cf. Browning, "A Death in the Desert;" Scott-Holland, "Creed and Character," serm. i.

20, p. 46. On the value of the Books as enhanced by Apostles' departure, cf. Bishop Lightfoot on Revision.

21, p. 49. On the reception of the Books on the Church's authority, see Archbishop Laud, "Conference with Fisher;" Hooker; Lee on Inspiration.

"There must be therefore some former knowledge presupposed which doth herein assure the hearts of all believers.

"Scripture teacheth us that saving truth which God hath discovered unto the world by revelation, *and it presumeth us taught otherwise that itself is Divine and sacred.* . . . And by experience we all know that the first outward motive leading men so to esteem of the Scriptures is *the authority of God's Church*" (Hooker, III. viii. 13, 14).

"We all believe that the Scriptures of God are sacred, and that they have proceeded from God; . . . *But it is not the word of God which doth or possibly can assure us, that we do well to think it His word.* For if

any one book of Scripture did give testimony to all, yet still that Scripture which giveth credit to the rest would require another Scripture to give credit unto it, neither could we ever come unto any pause whereon to rest our assurance this way; so that *unless beside Scripture there were something which might assure us that we do well*, we could not think we do well, no, not in being assured that Scripture is a sacred and holy rule of well-doing" (Hooker, II. iv. 2).

"For my part I should not believe the Gospel except as moved by the authority of the Church."

"It was on the testimony of the Catholics that I believed the Gospel" ("St. Augustine's reply to Manichæus," ch. v.).

NOTES TO SERMON III.

22, p. 54. On the general subject of the Church as Interpreter of the Bible, cf. St. Vincent of Lerins, "Against Heresy;" Tertullian.

"Indeed with regard to both Testaments, I consider oral and catechismal instruction as the *preparative* provided by Christ Himself in the establishment of a visible Church" (Coleridge, "Confession of an Inquiring Spirit," p. 67).

23, p. 55. On the difficulty of the Bible, cf. Newman, "Lectures on Justification," p. 131.

24, p. 56. Unsystematic character of the New Testament: "And this supposition [the value of the Church] is further borne out by the very structure of the sacred writings themselves, especially of the Epistles, which

were actually addressed, and bear the mark of being adapted to those who had already been instructed in the principles of the Christian faith. They are composed in an unsystematic manner, especially ill-suited to minds unacquainted with the outlines of that doctrine which they treat of; fundamental tenets and inferences are mixed together, and many portions of them are designed to supplement, or correct, or limit what had been before communicated. Nor were the sacred writings intended to supersede, even afterwards, other concurrent and authoritative teaching; since, at a later period, when the apostolic Epistles were nearly all composed, and were probably in circulation, a succession of ministers was still provided for the very purpose of teaching" (Grant, "Bampton Lectures on Missions" [1843], p. 90).

"Thus, in fact, the Apostolic writings were written, as occasion required, *within the Church, and for the Church.* They presuppose membership in, and familiarity with its tradition. They are secondary, not primary instructors; for edification, not for initiation" (Gore, in "Lux Mundi," p. 339).

Occasional character of Scripture: "Tho several books of Scripture having had each some several occasion and particular purpose which caused them to bo written, the contents thereof are according to tho exigence of that special end whereunto they are intended" (Hooker, I. xiv. 3).

25, p. 58. This is Chillingworth's statement.

26, p. 61. On the purpose of the Writers, cf. Gore, in "Lux Mundi."

27, p. 65. The Scriptures themselves refer the believer to the preaching already received by the Church; cf.—

Rom. xvi. 17. "*Contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned.*"

1 Cor. vii. 17. "And so ordain I in all Churches."

„ xi. 23. "That which also I delivered unto you."

1 Cor. xv. 1. "The Gospel which I preached nnto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand."

Phil. iv. 9. "Those things which ye have both learned and received and heard and seen in me, do."

Col. ii. 7. "*Established in the Faith as ye have been taught.*"

1 Thess. iv. 2. "For ye know what charge we gave yon through the Lord Jesus."

2 Thess. ii. 15. "Stand fast and hold the traditions which ye have been tanght, whether by word or onr Epistle."

2 Tim. ii. 2. "And the things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

28, p. 70. This argument was employed as far back as the third century by the African writer Tertullian.

"But I shall not regret to subjoin to my interpretations, also, for your benefit, whatsoever I have at any time accurately ascertained and treasured up in my memory, as I have received it from the elders, and have recorded it in order to give additional confirmation to the truth, by my testimony. For I have never, like many, delighted to hear those that tell many things, but those that teach the truth; neither those that record

foreign precepts, but those that are given from the Lord, to our faith, and that came from the truth itself. But if I met with any one who had been a follower of the elders anywhere, I made it a point to inquire what were the declarations of the elders. What was said by Andrew, Peter, or Philip? What by Thomas, James, John, Matthew, or any other of the disciples of our Lord? What was said by Aristion, and the presbyter John, disciples of the Lord? For I do not think that I derived so much benefit from books as from the living voice of those that are still surviving" (Papias, quoted in Eusebius, Eccles. Hist., iii. 39).

29, p. 73. Internal State of the Church in the third century: "Instead of enthusiastic independent Christians, we find a new literature of revelation, the New Testament and Christian priests. When did these formations begin? How and by what influence was the living faith transformed into the creed to be believed, the surrender to Christ into a philosophic Christianity, the Holy Church into the *Corpus permixtum*, the glowing hope of the Kingdom of Heaven into a doctrine of immortality and deification, prophecy into a learned exegesis and theological science . . . the formal prayers into a solemn ritual . . . ?

There can be no doubt about the answer: these formations are as old in their origin as the detachment of the Gospel from the Jewish Church. A religious faith which seeks to establish a communion of its own in opposition to another, is compelled to borrow from that other what it needs. Even the holiest must clothe itself in the same existing earthly forms as the profane, if it wishes to found on earth a confederacy which is to

take the place of another" (Harnack, "History of Dogma," i. 45, 46).

30, p. 75. "The Scriptures are given, not to the individual but to the community of the faithful, the Body of Christ, of which the individual is only one member" (Auberlen, "The Divine Revelation," p. 397).

". . . Tu in eos Libros, qui quoque modo se habeant, sancti tamen divinarumque rerum pleni, prope totius generis humani confessione diffamantur, *sine duce irruis, et de his sine præceptore audes ferre sententiam;* nec si tibi aliqua occurrunt quæ videantur absurda, tarditatem tuam et putrefactum tabe hujus mundi animum, qualis omnium stultorum est, accusas potius, quam eos qui fortasse a talibus intelligi nequeunt!" (St. Augustine, "De Utilitate Credendi," vol. viii. 112).

Interpretation: "The Bible, directly we become acquainted with it, strikes us as a book different from all others. It challenges and fixes attention. We feel it, and can understand it but imperfectly. Something more than itself seems actually needed, and always to have been had for its interpretation. The Bible is a fact hard to explain, both as to its origin and its contents. The Tradition companying the Bible is no less a fact, and we all, in various degrees, use it. It is a life and a light, the possession or enjoyment of which in no way depends on our analysis of it. The light is reflected from a thousand objects all around: it softens off into twilight here, and it brightens there; it is mysterious everywhere; the cross-lights may sometimes seem confusing, and the colours many. To ask, however, for a philosophy of it, or an exact history of it, or a record that might be tested, is to ask for a literature in lieu of a

vital agency. That this Life and Light are in the Church, is but a further statement of the same fact.

"Nor may we here omit to reassert, that all Christians have, or try to practice, a way of reading the Sacred Scriptures with other light thrown on them. Apostles and Apostolic men, saints, martyrs, doctors, and fathers accept naturally this method. Barnabas, the two Clements, Origen, Jerome, the Gregories, Augustine, Basil—why continue the list?—we should have to enumerate all, even to the present day. It is everywhere still. . . . It is even painfully copied by the Puritans themselves, when near enough to the Church to be so far influenced. None, we find at length, are really going on in Religion by the letter of Scripture" (Irons, "The Bible and its Interpreters," pp. 128, 129).

31, p. 77. See Bishop Beveridge on Article XX., Works, vii. p. 379, and the following passages from Hooker, Dr. Pusey's "Letter to Bishop of Oxford," and Gibson on the Thirty-nine Articles.

The sense in which "Scripture contains all things necessary to salvation:" "Although the Scripture of God therefore be stored with infinite variety of matter in all kinds, although it abound with all sorts of laws, yet the principal intent of Scripture is to deliver the laws of duties supernatural. Oftentimes it hath been in very solemn manner disputed, whether all things necessary unto salvation be necessarily set down in the Holy Scriptures or no. If we define that necessary unto salvation, whereby the way to salvation is in any sort made more plain, apparent, and easy to be known; then is there no part of true philosophy, no art of account, no kind of science rightly so

called but the Scripture must contain it. If only those things be necessary, as surely none else are, without the knowledge and practice whereof it is not the will and pleasure of God to make any ordinary grant of salvation; it may be, notwithstanding and oftentimes hath been demanded, how the books of Holy Scripture contain in them all necessary things, when of things necessary the very chiefest is to know what books we are bound to esteem holy; which point is confessed impossible for the Scripture itself to teach. Whereunto we may answer with truth, that there is not in the world any art or science, which, proposing unto itself an end (as every one doth some end or other), hath been therefore thought defective, if it have not delivered simply whatsoever is needful to the same end; but all kinds of knowledge have their certain bounds and limits; each of them presupposeth many necessary things learned in other sciences and known beforehand. He that should take upon him to teach men how to be eloquent in pleading causes, must needs deliver unto them whatsoever precepts are requisite unto that end; otherwise he doth not the thing which he taketh upon him. Seeing then no man can plead eloquently unless he be able first to speak; it followeth that ability of speech is in this case a thing most necessary. Notwithstanding every man would think it ridiculous, that he which undertaketh by writing to instruct an orator should therefore deliver all the precepts of grammar; because his profession is to deliver precepts necessary unto eloquent speech, yet so that they which are to receive them be taught beforehand so much of that which is thereunto necessary, as comprehendeth the skill of speaking. In like sort,

albeit Scripture do profess to contain in it all things that are necessary unto salvation; yet the meaning cannot be simply of all things which are necessary, but all things that are necessary in some certain kind or form; as all things which are necessary, and either could not at all, or could not easily be known by the light of natural discourse; all things which are necessary to be known that we may be saved, but known with presupposal of knowledge concerning certain principles whereof it receiveth us already persuaded, and then instructeth us in all the residue that are necessary. In the number of these principles one is the sacred authority of Scripture. Being therefore persuaded by other means that these Scriptures are the oracles of God, themselves do then teach us the rest, and lay before us all the duties whioh God requireth at our hands as necessary unto salvation" (Hooker, I. xiv.).

"'The Church has authority in controversies of Faith.' The Church is subject to Holy Scripture, but set over individuals; she may not (1) 'expound one place of Holy Scripture that it be repugnant to another,' nor may she (2) 'decree anything against Holy Writ,' nor may she (3) 'besides the same, enforce anything to be believed for necessity of salvation;' but then the very fixing of these limits of her power shows that she has power within these limits; that she is the 'expositor of Holy Writ,' provided she do 'not expound one place that it be repugnant to another;' she may 'decree things' provided they be not 'against Holy Writ;' she may 'enforce things to be believed,' even 'for necessity of salvation,' provided they be neither 'against, nor besides, Holy Scripture.' But the power

of 'expouuding,' 'decreeing,' 'ordaining,' implies that her children are to receive her expositious, and obey her decrees, and accept her authority in controversies of faitb, aud the appeal lies not to their 'private judgmeut;' they are uot the arbiters, whether she pronounce rightly or uo; for what sort of decree or authority were that, of which every one were first to judge, and then if his judgment coincided with the law, to obey? who would uot see the absnrdity of this iu matters of human judgmeut? 'If thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.'

"But our Church in this article further aud accurately defines the uature of her authority; the Church is a 'keeper and witness of Holy Writ;' she is its guardian, it is from her that we know of what books the Canou of Scripture cousists: she is the 'witness' to the trnths which it coutains; uot a 'judge' over it, uot having to determiue new truth, or erect new articles of faith; but a witness to the doctrine which she herself received in coutinued succession from the primitive Church, as being contained in Holy Scripture" (Pusey, "Letter to the Bishop of Oxford").

The Church is the ordained teacher of truth: "To make Scripture, in the first instauce, the teacher, is eutirely to mistake its true office aud function. The Gospels were written, uot to couvert unbelievers, but that those who had beeu already orally instructed (*i.e.* who had received the teaching of the Church) might know the certainty of those things which they had beeu taught.[1] So, also, the Epistles were addressed to

[1] See Luke i. 1–4.

regularly organized Churches, and were written to confirm those who had previously received apostolic teaching. Indeed, it is everywhere the case that 'the Bible assumes the existence of a living instructor in the truth, who will indoctrinate us into the rudiments of it, and refer us to the Scriptures themselves for the proof of what he teaches. If the instructor is dispensed with, and the disciple thrown back merely on the Bible and his natural faculties, he will be very liable to stumble, and almost certain to do so as regards those more recondite definitions of doctrine which the Church's experience of heresies has shown her to be necessary, and has taught her to make.'[1] These offices of 'the Church to teach, the Bible to prove,' may be illustrated from the incident recorded in Acts viii. 26–40. The Ethiopian eunuch was 'sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah.' He was, then, in possession of the Scriptures, and, according to the rather foolish saying, 'The Bible, and the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants,' these ought to have been sufficient for him. But plainly they were not; for, in answer to Philip's question, 'Understandest thou what thou readest?' the answer is returned, 'How can I, except some man should guide me?' and this is followed by the further question, 'Of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself, or of some other?' Something more was needed than the possession of the Scriptures, and that something was supplied by Philip, the representative of the *ecclesia docens*, who 'opened his mouth, and, beginning from the Scripture, preached

[1] Goulburn, "Holy Catholic Church," p. 294.

unto him Jesus.' Here we see the Church at work, and the right method to be followed, as it is seen throughout the Acts of the Apostles, where we everywhere find them stating the facts, and teaching with authority, while they prove their statements from the Scriptures, and refer their hearers to these as confirming them.[1] And if this method was employed when only the Old Testament was in existence, it seems natural to suppose that much more should it be followed now, when the fuller revelation is also committed to writing"[2] (E. C. S. Gibson, "The Thirty-nine Articles," vol. ii. pp. 527, 528).

32, p. 78. "Here some men perhaps may ask, seeing the Canon of the Scripture is perfect, and most abundantly of itself sufficient for all things, what need we join unto it the authority of the Church's understanding and interpretation? The reason is this; because the Scripture being of itself so deep and profound, all men do not understand it in one and the same sense, but diverse men diversely, this man and that man, this way and that way, expound and interpret the sayings thereof, so that, to one's thinking, so many men, so many opinions almost may be gathered out of them" (St. Vincent of Lerins, "Against Heresy," ch. ii.).

33, p. 82. Mentioning the assertion that "the Bible is the only religious bond of union and ground of unity among Protestants, and the like," Coleridge replies: "For the confutation of this whole reasoning, it might be sufficient to ask: Has it produced these effects? Would

[1] See Acts ii. 14-36; iii. 12-26; xiii. 16-42; xvii. 2, 3, 11; xviii. 28.

[2] See on this subject, Gore's "Roman Catholic Claims," chs. iii. and iv.

not the contrary statement be nearer to the fact? What did the Churches of the first four centuries hold on this point? To what did they attribute the rise and multiplication of heresies? Can any learned and candid Protestant affirm that there existed and exists no ground for the charges of Bossuet and other eminent Romish divines? . . .

"The Bible is the appointed conservatory, an indispensable criterion, and a continual source and support of true Belief. But that the Bible is the sole source; that it not only contains, but constitutes, the Christian Religion; that it is, in short, a Creed, consisting wholly of articles of Faith: that consequently we need no rule, help, or guide, spiritual or historical, to teach us what parts are and what are not articles of Faith—all being such,—and the difference between the Bible and the Creed being this, that the clauses of the latter are all unconditionally necessary to salvation, but those of the former conditionally so (that is, as soon as the words are known to exist in any one of the canonical books), and that, under this limitation, the belief is of the same necessity in both, and not at all affected by the greater or lesser importance of the matter to be believed;—this scheme differs widely from the preceding, though its adherents often make use of the same words in expressing their belief. And this latter scheme, I assert, was brought into currency by and in favour of those by whom the operation of grace, the aids of the Spirit, the necessity of regeneration, the corruption of our nature, in short, all the peculiar and spiritual mysteries of the Gospel were explained and diluted away" (S. T. Coleridge, "Confessions of an Enquiring Spirit," pp. 52–55).

NOTES TO SERMON IV.

34, p. 85. On the general subject of Inspiration, see Bishop Westcott on the Canon; Lee on Inspiration of Holy Scripture; Giffard on the Prophets; Auberlen, "The Divine Revelation."

Individual feeling no test of Scripture: "There is, however, one more resort of the popnlar theorist whose course we are now following to the end. Baffled in the pretence of 'free thonght,' and detected in the evasions on 'common ground,' he has reconrse to his feelings. 'Say what you will about difficulties,' he now alleges, 'I find this blessed Bible to be a sacred guide to me. Am I to donbt that Truth which it conveys and certifies to my soul and conscience?' Again, however, our inqnirer is wrong. Who has asked him to dispute such felt truth? Our investigation has been of a different kind, viz. concerning his proving for himself the correctness of the text of Scripture. If he does not want to know that, let him say so. His feelings about any truth will not establish the accnracy of any page or line of the Pentateuch, or Isaiah, or Daniel. To say that Revelation is thus made to the individual, is to appeal to the 'verifying facnlty' without reserve, and give up the Bible. If his consciousness of a Truth proves to him that a book which contains it is inspired, will he adhere to that view whenever any book tells him what he believes to be true? And will he deny the inspiration of any part of a sacred book that he does not thus feel? If he does (as some do not) feel the deep truth of the Book of Esther, or Canticles, or Ecclesiastes, or Daniel; or the instructiveness of the story of Bel, or

Susanna; or the certainty of the angel's descent at the Pool of Bethesda, has he a right to give them up? It is clear enough, indeed, that the popular theology, notwithstanding its pretence to regard the Bible and Revelation as identical and co-extensive, does, by neglect, give up a very considerable part of the Sacred Volume; but it scarcely as yet avows that it does so, on the principle of following its own sense of truth. In any case, the appeal to individual feeling as the test of religious doctrine and practice is an abandonment, *pro tanto*, of the ground that the Hebrew and Greek Scripture, the 'Written Word' is God's infallible voice to mankind, His one and complete Revelation. Such an appeal is a taking refuge in the subjective, and even casting aside the objective" (Irons, "The Bible and its Interpreters," pp. 44, 45).

35, p. 86. Cf. Auberlen, "The Divine Revelation," p. 234.

The literary theory: "We do but harm ourselves, hardening our own hearts in self-conceit, when we roughly assume that multitudes of inquirers into Scripture are right in taking to the plan of individual interpretation, and yet wilfully wrong in their conclusions" (Irons, "The Bible and its Interpreters," p. 73).

36, p. 88. Inspiration of genius: "In order to leave room for such profitable discussions of difficult questions, *there is a distinct boundary line separating all productions subsequent to apostolic times from the authoritative canonical books* of the Old and New Testaments. The *authority* of these books has come down to us from the Apostles through the successions of bishops and the extension of the Church, and from a position of lofty

supremacy, claims the submission of every faithful and pious mind.

"If we are perplexed by an *apparent contradiction* in Scripture, it is not allowable to say, 'The author of this book is mistaken;' but either the manuscript is faulty, or the translation is wrong, or you have not understood.

"*In the innumerable books* that have been *written latterly*, we may *sometimes find the same truth as in Scripture, but there is not the same authority.* Scripture has a sacredness peculiar to itself. In other books the reader may follow his own opinion. . . . In such cases a man is at liberty to withhold his belief, unless there is some clear demonstration or some canonical authority to show that the doctrine or statement either must or may be true. But *in consequence of the distinctive peculiarity of the sacred writings, we are bound to receive as true whatever* the Canon shows to have been *said by even one prophet or apostle or evangelist.* Otherwise, not a single page will be left for the guidance of human fallibility, if contempt for the wholesome authority of the canonical books either puts an end to that authority altogether, or involves it in hopeless confusion" (St. Augustine's "Reply to Faustus," bk. xi. p. 197, tr.).

37, p. 106. On objections to the Old Testament, see St. Augustine's "Reply to Faustus;" Moseley, "Ruling Ideas;" Hessey's "Boyle Lectures;" Driver's "Sermons."

Actions in Old Testament "related not commended." See "St. Aug. c. Faustus," bk. xxii. 45; trans. p. 437. See, also, p. 452: "The mistake of Faustns and of Manichæans generally is in supposing that these

objections prove anything against us, as if our reverence for Scripture, and our profession of regard for its authority, bound us to approve of all the evil actions mentioned in it; whereas the greater our homage for the Scriptures, the more decided must be our condemnation of what the truth of Scripture itself teaches us to condemn."

"The sacred record, like a faithful mirror, has no flattery in its portraits, and either itself passes sentence upon human actions as worthy of approval or disapproval, or leaves the reader to do so" (St. Augustine's "Reply to Faustus," bk. xxii. p. 65; trans. p. 454).

38, p. 107. Many modern objections to the Scripture are based on theories of Inspiration which the Church has never sanctioned, cf. *e.g.* Coleridge.

NOTES TO SERMON V.

39, p. 113. The Christian value of the Old Testament: cf. Dean Church, "Gifts of Civilization;" Kirkpatrick, "Divine Library of the Old Testament;" Driver's "Sermons on Old Testament;" and Fillion, "L'Idée Centrale de la Bible."

Old and New Testaments: "The general end both of the Old and the New is one; the difference between them consisting in this, that the Old did make wise by teaching salvation through Christ that *should* come, the New . . . that Christ the Saviour *is* come" (Hooker, I. xiv. 4; cf. V. xx. 6).

40, p. 124. From St. Augustine's reply to Faustus.

41, p. 129. Principles of worship. Cf. Freeman, "Principles of Divine Worship;" Willis on Sacrifice.

NOTES TO SERMON VI.

42, p. 143. On the omission of the Apocrypha, cf Wordsworth on Inspiration.

43, p. 147. See Sermon II.

44, p. 148. For this thought the writer is indebted to Canon Gore, "Mission of the Church."

45, p. 149. "Because many expressions did not seem to agree with the adopted views, yet could not be overlooked, they had either to question their authority as Luther did with the Epistle of St. James, or, by doing violence to them, reduce them to harmony with their creed. This was how it fared in Calvin's hands with the passages which declare the universality of grace, and the expressions in regard to the eating and drinking of the Blood of Christ, St. John vi." (Auberlen, "The Divine Revelation," p. 232.)

46, p. 156. Scripture only *partially understood* as to its contents. "For let us not think that as long as the world doth endure, the wit of man shall be able to sound the depths of that which may be concluded out of the Scripture" (Hooker, I. xiv. 2; cf. Butler, and Sanday's "Bampton Lectures").

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